Monday, February 16, 2009 | 8 sections / Vol. 24 / No. 70 | P18 | www.inquirer.net

UN: Job losses around the world could hit 50M
WORLD / A28

CHR raises alarm over arbitrary arrests
ACROSS / A17

Last chapter of The Magic Circle
LEARNING / E1

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEW

After 63 yrs, vets to get only P7,000/year–Joker

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jocelyn R. Uy

"TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE."

This was how Sen. Joker Arroyo yesterday described the one-time compensation that the US Congress voted to grant Filipino veterans of World War II after they had waited for more than six decades.

Arroyo said only about "10 percent" of

AFTER 63 YEARS A6

Joker, Miriam say VFA must be scrapped

Slam US refusal to hand Smith over

By Christine O. Avendaño

TWO LEADING SENATORS ALLIED WITH THE ARROYO administration yesterday came out in favor of scrapping the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) in the face of the US refusal to yield custody of American Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to the Philippines.

Senators Joker Arroyo and Miriam Defensor-Santiago also said the Philippine government should now take custody of Smith following the Supreme Court's decision last week and clap him in a Philippine jail.

"If the US won't give Smith to us, we will abrogate the treaty," Arroyo said in Pilipino in an interview over dzBB radio.

"We're being slapped around here and then some would argue we need America. Other countries would have abrogated such an agreement," the maverick senator said.

Arroyo and Santiago said the 10-year VFA agreement allowed for such an abrogation.

"I very much would want to abrogate it. Under the VFA, we only have to give a one-year notice before we terminate the agreement," Santiago said in a separate interview on dzBB radio.

But Santiago, chair of the Senate foreign relations committee, said Congress

JOKER A4

MORE THAN HOT AIR Skydivers perform an aerial stunt during the 14th Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Show Festival held at the Clark economic zone in Pampanga. Over 25 hot air balloons dotted the skies during the show's opening.

MAJORITY CAUCUS

Ping: Let's not be strict on rules of evidence

By Christine O. Avendaño

SEN. PANFILO LACSON YESTERDAY said he would push for the resumption of the Senate inquiry into the alleged collusion among Filipino and foreign contractors, and several personalities in cornering World Bank-funded projects.

Lacson said he would also ask session on the caucus of the Senate majority scheduled for today "not to be too strict on the application of rules of evidence" at hearings.

He said this arrangement would allow senators to look into the voluminous World Bank report containing transcripts of interviews with 90 witnesses, resource persons and informants in connection with the purported rigged bidding of its funded road projects.

"We should proceed with the investigation the way it should proceed and we shouldn't be strict on the application of rules of evidence, as it's very clear in our rules, that we're not bound by the rules of evidence," Lacson said in a phone interview.

He was referring to the World Bank report titled "Notice of Sanction Proceedings Part II Record of Interviews," which he furnished other lawmakers at the hearing last week.

Lacson said it did not matter if Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, chair of the economic affairs committee, would again head the hearing. "I will raise this in the caucus because the Senate came out badly [at the last hearing]," he said.

PING A11

Tuna industry caught in net of recession

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—LITO Vargas surveys the day's catch of yellowfin tuna as they slide down the steel gutting table at the loading port here in southern Mindanao.

"We used to haul them in such big numbers once, but now the catch has dropped right off," Vargas sighed as the first batch of steamed tuna was sent to the processing plant to be frozen, packed or canned before being shipped across the world.

There are many reasons for the falling catch, among them volatile crude oil prices and changing water temperatures that mean fewer tuna traverse these seas on their migration routes.

Vargas and others in the local industry, however, said the main culprit was a massive slowdown in demand from the cities-hit United States, which used to account for more than 50 percent of General

TUNA A11

FALLING CATCH A worker brings tuna to a processing plant as the industry reels from a declining catch due to volatile oil prices and changing water temperatures.

AP

Senators have exaggerated sense of jurisdiction, power

By Amando Doronila

THE PHILIPPINES AND THE WORLD Bank are not for a confrontation after the Senate decided on Thursday to issue a subpoena to compel the bank's country director, Ben Hobman, to testify at the hearing of the economic affairs committee on the latter's reports on corruption in road projects that the agency is funding.

ANALYSIS

Senator President Juan Ponce Enrile, who moved for the issuance of the subpoena, said Hofman should face the Senate committee because it would be difficult to "just swallow hook, line and sinker" anything that came from the bank. Enrile said he wanted the World Bank to substantiate its charges.

The decision launched the Philippines, more than the Senate, into an exercise of brinkmanship over the powers of the chamber to subject representatives of accredited international institutions to disciplinary action by Philippine laws, least of all the Senate's own legislative powers.

This decision marks an unprecedented overreach by the Senate in exercising its power of legislative inquiry and provokes an international dispute

SENATORS A13

Crisis idles Filipino workers in Dubai

DUBAI—LOWLY PAID FILIPINO AND other Asian workers who toil long days to build the skyscrapers of Dubai have become the latest victims of the global financial crisis as companies run short of business and money.

For many years, the Gulf emirate had been a magnet for Asian workers who fed the booming economy with cheap manpower—from cleaners and gardeners to skilled and unskilled builders.

A report issued earlier this month showed that $560 billion worth of building projects in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), of which Dubai is a part, had been put on hold due to the slowdown. That was 45 percent of the total.

Arnold, a 26-year-old Filipino mu-

CRISIS A12

Families grow own veggies, skip meals

(Editor's Note: These are tough. We're going through it. It's time to do something. Now. And quick. The Inquirer presents how—for certain aspects of your life. Let us know about the measures you are taking to get you through the rough times. If we are together, we can tough it out. Send suggestions to yourvoice@inquirer.com.ph)

Project Editor: Juan V. Santiverio Jr.

SPECIAL REPORT

By Jonas Cabiles Soltas
Inquirer Southern Luzon

NAGA CITY—GATHERING GREENS in the backyard and using coconut milk to add flavor to dishes are among the measures people are taking here to cope with the hard times.

Families also resort to skipping meals, borrowing money from relatives, migrating to other places in search of better job opportunities, and asking idle family members to look for work to augment the household income, according to a study by the Ateneo de Naga University.

Others consider stopping family members from going to school.

Digna Mercado, 50, of Concepcion

FAMILIES A10

White House takes more informal air

WASHINGTON—LESS THAN A month in office, President Barack Obama has ushered in a more informal White House culture that contrasts sharply with that of his predecessor, George W. Bush. From his dress to his schedule, Obama has introduced a more

WHITE A31

Second FRONTPAGE

SUERTRES
SUPERLOTTO 6/49
P206,375,533.20

No peace talks anytime soon–MILF

Both sides so far apart on framework

By Edwin G. Fernandez
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT (MILF) said over the weekend peace negotiations with the government were not likely to happen soon because the two sides could not agree on the framework of new talks, contrary to Malacañang's pronouncements.

In an interview, Khaled Mura, MILF deputy information chief, said the impasse he could not see how the talks could proceed if the government continued to insist on using the Constitution as the negotiation's parameters.

Mura said the MILF launched a reconnaissance in Mindanao more than 30 years ago precisely because it perceived the Constitution to be "pro-oligarch and anti-Bangsamoro."

He was responding to statements made by presidential peace adviser Avelino Razon that talks to end the fighting in Mindanao would resume possibly next month, and that a peace deal would be forged soon, in the year or early next year with Malaysia will the main facilitator.

Razon said in an interview over dzBB radio yesterday that the MILF had conveyed that it was willing to soften its stance and reiterated that talks would resume soon.

But MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu was quoted in an Agence France-Presse report yesterday as saying the rebel leadership had not received word from Malaysia on a date and venue for the resumption of talks.

Mura said the MILF was "not happy" with a statement Razon made in a meeting with local officials in Kidapawan City last Friday that the new peace talks would have to run parallel with the Constitution "as a framework." Razon had added that last year's botched memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain (MOA-AD) would never see a negotiation renascence.

The MILF spokesperson also criticized the government for "giving false hope" to Mindanao's local communities by saying that it has been trying its best to resolve the problem.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had said her peace emissaries were conducting an "hands-on, consultative talks with communities in the Muslim areas [and] not after a series after the peace talks collapsed last year.

The Supreme Court stopped the signing of the ancestral domain agreement in Malaysia on Aug. 5, when it declared it unconstitutional. The government then announced it would no longer pursue the agreement. Fresh fighting since has left more than 300 dead.

The MILF wasn't the first agreement was already a "done deal," pointing out that government and MILF peace negotiators had initialed the document in Kuala Lumpur. The rebel group's main new negotiator is Jaber Gani Abdul, who was abducted by nine gunmen on Friday from his residence on Basilan island and taken to the province's mountainous heartland, provincial police Chief Supt. Marcelino Garcia said.

Navy Commodore Alex Pama, who heads a new regional multishipping force, said the military received a similar intelligence report and was validating it.

He said government forces were attempting to rescue Jaber until five other hostages seized recently in Basilan.

"It's definitely the Abu Sayyaf," Pama said.

With reports from AFP

Abus seized Sri Lanka activist, says military

ZAMBOANGA—ABU SAYYAF bandits are holding a Sri Lankan peace activist in a jungle stronghold in Basilan, according to police and military officials.

An Abu Sayyaf faction led by commander Puruji Indanan Omar Abdul, who was abducted by nine gunmen on Friday from his residence on Basilan island and taken to the province's mountainous heartland, provincial police Chief Supt. Marcelino said.

Navy Commodore Alex Pama, who heads a new regional multishipping force, said the military received a similar intelligence report and was validating it.

He said government forces were attempting to rescue Jaber until five other hostages seized recently in Basilan.

"It's definitely the Abu Sayyaf," Pama said.

Commander Alexander Pama, chief of Joint Task Force Tribute and of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao, said Abdul and his captors were sighted in the Kapayas area late last month.

Kapayas is a village in Isabela City that links the town of Maluso and Lamitan.

Abdul, 36, was seized by his Buenos-based acquisition group, Nuestalone Peace Force, in Mindanao last year to help foster peace between the government and Muslim guerrillas.

He was abducted from his residence, which also serves as his office, a Filipino customary assigned to escape ambushed in the kidnapper exposed his. He gun-rose took-slaying weapons, four cell phones and cash, Marapan (a.m.) AP, Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

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Clinton leaves for Asia on symbolic first trip

WASHINGTON—US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's first trip abroad as President Barack Obama's chief diplomat will emphasize the administration's interest in Asia while probably producing no major policy changes.

Previous secretaries of state had traveled first to Europe or the Middle East. But Clinton, who departs Sunday (Monday in Manila) for Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and China, her first in a crisis-hobbled premier aimed at reassuring friends and allies of their standing and improving the Obamas' still-early engagement.

"It is important to signal that we intend to develop broader and deeper relationships not only with the countries that I'll be visiting but with others ... across throughout Asia and the Pacific," she told reporters in a conference call aboard the her trip. "We believe that our futures are inextricably linked."

Global issues

At the Asia leg[illegible] in New York on Friday, Clinton spoke of wanting "more vigorous and persistent commitment and engagement" with the region. Per talks with leaders in each capital, she is bringing a shard of global issues, including the financial crisis and climate change.

Efforts to promote North Korea to denuclearize its nuclear weapons are on the political part of her agenda in Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing, where concern is high over recent saber-rattling from the North.

Her talking points will touch on human rights concerns in China and Indonesia, where Obama spent part of his childhood. Other items for China include closer energy cooperation, efforts to fight piracy and the threat of pandemic disease such as bird flu.

Alliances

The Obama administration is looking to reshape the past approach to Beijing, broadening and deepening relations with an eye toward economics and dealing with carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. The administration wants to reinforce traditional alliances with Japan and South Korea, which host thousands of American troops, as the bedrock of Asia-Pacific security.

Clinton intends to sign an agreement in Japan that will see 8,000 Marines now stationed on Okinawa relocated to Guam and will reconfirm the Japanese government to help pay for further realignment of US forces, officials said. In Indonesia, she plans to announce an upgrade to US relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), a regional grouping that often felt slighted during the Bush administration.

Accompanying her will be her new special envoy for climate change, Todd Stern, a former White House assistant who was the chief US negotiator at the Kyoto Protocol talks in President Bill Clinton's administration. AP

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Lung cancer trial to go on–CA

THE COURT OF APPEALS HAS DISMISSED A motion for reconsideration filed by Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. which sought the reversal of an earlier appellate court decision ordering a Makati court to hear a complaint for damages filed by a lung cancer victim.

In a resolution issued Feb. 6, the Court of Appeals Seventh Division said the cigarette company failed to present any new arguments that merited a reversal of its decision on Sept. 22, 2008.

The court in its earlier decision said the Makati Regional Trial Court was correct in accepting the case for damages filed by lung cancer victim Maximo Nuyen despite a motion to dismiss filed by PMFI which argued the case had already prescribed.

PMFI also questioned the jurisdiction of the Makati RTC to hear the complaint.

Nuyen, a brother of activist-turning-priest Fr. Robert Nuyen, said he contracted cancer in October 2000 but he only filed the case against PMFI on May 21, 2004. An amended complaint was also filed on Oct. 26, 2004.

In his suit, Nuyen said Philip Morris' "aggressive advertisements and deceptive" ad declare ingredients enticed him to smoke since he was a teenager.

He said he was 46 years old when he discovered he had lung cancer in 2000. He had quit smoking "five years earlier, he said.

Norman Bordadora

KAPISANAN NG MGA BRODKASTER NG PILIPINAS

KBP (Association of Broadcasters of the Philippines)

The newly elected officers of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) is to be inducted today at Malacañang with no less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to induct them.

Turn to page B2-4 for more information about the KBP; its accomplishments last year, and plans for 2009.

Correction

IN THE FEB. 14 issue, an article on Page A6—"Joker enables us bash former client's aide"—misstated the place of detention of Baron Mikey Oliveros. Former Lt. Gen. Victor Ludlad is in the 1Mdiv. Ludlad was held at Camp Guillermo Nakar in Quezon province—not Camp Crame in Quezon City.

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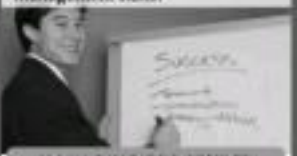

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2009

J. de Quiros, PDI columnist's ma; 96

HILETA SAYOMAGOR DE QUIROS, mother of Philippine Daily Inquirer columnist Conrado de Quiros, died early yesterday afternoon. She was 96. She had been bedridden following a stroke last year. With the added weight of years on her back, she finally succumbed to her affliction. She died peacefully in her sleep.

She was born on June 16, 1913, and despite much adversity lived to a ripe old age with laughter and grace. She is survived by her sons Basilio de Quiros Jr., Conrado de Quiros and Paul de Quiros and their spouses Maria Cecilia Bengzon, Teresita Manahan and Mirla Hizon.

Her body has been cremated and her ashes in Sta. Maria de la Strada, Kalipunan avenue, Quezon City. She will be interred on Wednesday morning.

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INQUIRER

Joker, Miriam: Scrap VFA

Panagsanjan Ad would have to convince President Macapagal-Arroyo to agree to the anti-scrapping decision because the US government would only deal with the executive branch on foreign relations.

She said she did not know what the Palace would have to say to the abrogation of the VFA, considering that the government had many requests for assistance from the US government.

Santiago was among the senators who voted in 1999 for the ratification of the VFA, which permits the conduct of US troops engaged in military exercises in the Philippines.

Arroyo was a member of the House of Representatives when the VFA was ratified by the Senate, but he had been one of the secret's critics.

Others favor abrogation

Several militant groups have also demanded the scrapping of the VFA, following the Supreme Court ruling last week upholding the constitutionality of the agreement. Senior Chief Justice Antonio Eloegarbay also favored abrogation.

In its ruling, the high court also ordered the Department of Foreign Affairs to immediately negotiate with the US authorities the transfer of Smith to detention in a Philippine jail facility.

Congress in 2006 cut short the Filipino woman. "Room," Smith was initially held at a Makati City Jail but was transferred to the US Embassy in December of that year following an executive agreement between Manila and Washington.

Like Arroyo, Santiago wanted Smith to be tried in a Philippine court right away, preferably in the Second Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa.

Santiago said that had a Filipino entered US laws in America, he would readily have been placed in an American jail.

Santiago said she also did not buy the US Embassy explanation that it still had to consult Washington on the custody issue following the Supreme Court ruling.

"They have so many years of forces experience with other countries. They know what they have to do. So it's very clear that they are using for time and that's distinct tactic," she said.

Santiago said the foreign relations committee would hold a hearing on the issue on Thursday and she would invite experts.

But some senior Palace authorities could not just go to the embassy and take him into custody. "What shall we do, we kidnap Smith?" she said, according to Angeles.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said the Department of Foreign Affairs through Secretary Alberto Romulo "will do what needs to be done."

"Obviously it will do what is necessary under the principle of international comity, do what is best in order to protect Philippine sovereignty in this issue," Remonde said.

Arroyo said he could not understand why abrogating itself was explaining the position of the US government.

US diplomats have told some Philippine officials that they are consulting legal experts in Washington and indicated their intention to keep Smith in US custody until the results have finally resolved Smith's appeal against his conviction.

Arroyo said it was "humiliating" for the country to be unable to enforce its laws.

"A Filipina was raped, Smith was convicted by Philippine courts and then we let him in the US Embassy," he scoffed.

Most divisive issue

Arroyo said that for more than half a century, the "single most divisive issue is Filipino-US defense arrangement" and how the question of jurisdiction over US detainees who commit crimes in the Philippines.

He said the Philippines was "faced for a rough time with the US, which is not ready to give up hold to Philippine prison authorities."

"We might as well do away with the VFA and call ourselves of as sovereignty that has become inconvenient," he said, adding that "disputing" he said in a phone interview.

Arroyo said the Philippines was not getting ready out of the VFA anyway and it would be better to just junk it.

Asked whether the issue of jurisdiction was not close to the VFA, Arroyo said it was apparently intended not to be clearly stated there.

"Men are very forgetful, remembering realistic pain as threatening us three years [The country] was determined to have an allies for the so-called allies mutual," Arroyo said.

Meanwhile Rep. Benjamin Bulluck R. Romero and the Philippines had several options, including abrogation of the VFA, should the United States play hard ball in handing over Smith to local prison authorities.

"The Philippines does not really help but only expand in the South seas," Romero said.

"If custody of Smith is not turned over to the Philippines, as the Supreme Court decided on, the Philippines can always abrogate the VFA. But we don't have to abrogate now. We can suspend the VFA until the Smith case is resolved."

Romero criticized the government's lack of urgency in effecting the transfer of Smith to Philippine custody.

He was referring to Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno's declaration that the Philippines would respect the ruling of the US court to allow Smith to remain in the custody of the US Embassy—until Washington and Manila had come up with a mutual agreement on where Smith would be held.

"The matter has to be dealt with seriously and decisively with the Philippine interests and sovereignty firmly upheld by the government," Romero said.

"The benefits from the VFA that the military gets means nothing if the sovereignty they are sworn to defend with their very lives is brazenly given up by the government."

Asserting sovereignty

Bayan Rep. Teddy Brawner Baguilat said that should the United States continue to ignore the high court's decision, the Philippines should call for an immediate suspension and review of the VFA.

"We have to assert our sovereignty because it is not just the decision of the foreign affairs or local government department [that is involved here]. It is our highest court," Arroyo said.

Bayan said that the United States should have enough time to appreciate the virtue of Smith's custody to our people. *With a report from Ellen C. Cabacungan Jr.*

After 63 years, vets to get only P7,000

Panagsanjan Ad

the 254,000 Filipinos who fought alongside the Americans during the war and who are still alive stood to benefit from the "piecemeal" measure just the number of survivors at 18,000.

"We waited for 63 years and this is the only compensation given to our veterans ... If [only 63 long years, 1946 to 2009, For the US to receive this worthless pledge," he said.

Speaking on radio and in an interview with the Internet, Arroyo said the P15,000 lump-sum payment authorized by the US Congress for each veteran (based in the Philippines) amounted to a measly P7,000 a year (less than P600 a month) for every year of their waiting.

For those Filipino veterans based in the United States who stand to get a $15,000 lump sum each, Arroyo said it was like giving them P12,000 a year or $1,000 a month over a period of 63 years, or so he said.

(Arroyo based the computation on an exchange rate of P50 to $1. The current exchange rate, however, is P49.32 to $1. So, the actual amount that a Filipino veteran will get in peso terms should even be much lower than Arroyo's computation.)

"That's the American way of irrational savings," the senator told the hearing in a phone interview.

Malacañang has endorsed the US action.

Two members of the House of Representatives—including Cavite Rep. Epimaco P. Barrogo Jr., whose father was a veteran imprisoned by the Japanese—said an amount could compensate for the sacrifices of the Filipino fighters that still, the US should help the veterans.

The compensation is provided for in the $787 billion economic stimulus approved by the US Congress to remove the American economy from its biggest crisis since the Great Depression.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said Malacañang "tried to get as much as we can."

"We're happy we have got as much [but still, that is better than nothing]," Remonde said, adding that haggling over amounts was perhaps not possible. Such matters are [a] matter of [the] law."

'Treated like patsies'

But Arroyo scoffed at that argument. Speaking on dzBB, he said, in Filipino, with sarcasm: "They threw a bone at you and you are very, very happy."

He said that actually, the US pledge was to give the Filipinos the same pay scale as their American counterparts.

"The latest development reflects the Philippines-US relationship. Kapag tayo kasi[ang] ka-[ano] ng mayaman na bansa, pag may [ano] ka[ng] [ano] thing, they treat us like patsies," Arroyo said.

He said that along with the issue of custody of US Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith—who has been convicted of rape but remains in American custody—the issue of compensation for the veterans had "brought into sharp focus the tragedy of Filipino-American relations."

Opening the door

Defense Undersecretary for Veterans Affairs Eduardo Ermita said the approval of the compensation opened the door to more perks for the veterans in the future.

"Our next step is to seek for other benefits that their American counterparts are enjoying, such as hospitalization and healthcare insurance," Congressional Commission on the Veterans of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO), said on the phone.

He said the US congressional action would also allow the Philippine government to push for benefits that could be enjoyed by spouses and dependents of Filipino veterans.

"Our veterans are very happy about it, especially now that their service has been recognized which put them in the same level as the American vets veterans," Carolina said. "What they are really after is the recognition, (money is only secondary."

Lump sum, not pension

On the practical side, Carolina pointed out, for those that Filipino veterans, who are over-age 65, get hold of the total amount now rather than get them practice in tickles.

"There is wisdom in making it lump sum because our veterans are really old. If they get their pension, monthly, they won't be able to enjoy the rest of it," he said.

The PVAO is set to work with the US Embassy to identify those who are legitimate Filipino veterans. He their claims by Feb. 16, 2010. Carolina said the office would be going to provinces to help veterans file their claims.

Carolina said that as of November last year, there were roughly 18,000 surviving Filipino war veterans, but the number could be lower "as they're dying at the rate of 500 every month."

In 1946, the United States passed the Rescission Act stripping Filipino of their status as US veterans.

The US government previously proposed $200 million as kind of quit claim, which the Philippines rejected. The old version of the proposal included acknowledgement that the Filipino veterans fought as "auxiliaries" of the US Army.

"The intended there because it's as if they fought merely as auxiliaries," Carolina said.

Barrogo, a member of the House committee on veterans affairs and welfare, said the US recognition was well worth the cost for all veterans and their families.

The Congressman said the 254 Filipino veterans have done is indeed priceless. No amount would be sufficient to pay for the value of their sacrifices, "Barrogo said. *With reports from Ellen C. Cabacungan Jr. and Jeremy Andrig*

Bill to make gun training mandatory

By Lolo D. Salamero

TOO MANY GUN ACCIDENTS ARE CAUSED by ignorance and negligence.

That is Bill filed in the House of Representatives would make it mandatory for would-be gun owners to undergo training in their safe use, maintenance and storage before being issued a permit to own and carry a firearm.

The measure's sponsor, Alliance for Rural Concerns party-list Rep. Nereus Acosta, noted that many fatal firearm accidents were caused by people who know nothing or little about responsible gun ownership.

"The proliferation of handguns has caused untoward incidents involving irresponsible individuals who lack the knowledge and skill for their safe use, maintenance and storage," Santiago said in a statement.

That, he said, there should be regulations covering the issuance of handgun permits, and one of that is a mandatory course on the safe use, maintenance and storage of such weapons.

Under the bill, an agency under the Philippine National Police or an entity designated by it would administer the training course.

Those who fail to comply with the regulation would be fined up to P50,000 and their weapon would be confiscated.

One problem, of late with fatal results, are non-commissioned in the Philippines, with many involving law enforcers.

Last year, a policeman in Davao City accidentally shot his wife dead when the gun he was playing with went off.

Housing fair held for OFWs

TAIPEI (CNS) — Filipinos in Taiwan were recently presented a choice of housing packages in a Bayanihan program launched by Senate Commissioners for, in partnership with the government's Pag-Ibig Fund and the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (Meco) in Taipei.

Payrollers in Taiwan won a duty-free housing fair that sought to match overseas Filipino workers' spending capacity and preferences with available housing packages in the Philippines.

The Land Bank of the Philippines and Philippine Health Insurance Corp. took part in the event held at Dominican International School in Taipei.

The one-stop housing fair also served to the remember the unveiling of the Pag-Ibig Gift Card, a joint initiative of Meco, Pag-Ibig and LandBank.

The electronic deb. it card may be linked to a mobile phone with a Smart SIM and may be used by OFWs to remit or transfer funds and make Pag-Ibig payments.

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No buy-bust in drug case, says Zuño

By Norman Bordadora

GOVERNMENT PROSECUTORS believe there was no buy-bust operation that led to the arrest of three young suspects for illegal drugs, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño told the Independent panel probing alleged bribery in the "Malung Boys" case.

Zuño—who approved the resolution that dismissed, for lack of probable cause, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency's trafficking charges against the Malung Boys—said the PDEA failed to comply with the rules on buy-bust operations.

One of his main arguments was that the agents failed to present the alleged "boodle money" in Zuño cash in the 8-digit drugs transactions between suspects Richard Brodett, Jorge Joseph and Joseph Tecson and the poseur buyers.

Zuño also said the agents failed to do an inventory in summary of the confiscated drugs.

"In this case ... PDEA's statements were incredible even by additional evidence during trial on we were compelled to conclude that a 'buy' did not take place and resolved to dismiss the complaint," Zuño said.

PDEA special enforcement service chief Maj. Ferdinand Marcelino maintained that anti-narcotics agents strictly followed the police manual in the buy-bust operation.

Marked money as evidence

He said the team no longer used ultraviolet dust powder on marked money to entrap drug pushers.

Citing operations past experiences, Marcelino said drug traffickers were quick to notice the dust powder and took measures to avoid arrest.

Instead of the dust powder, he said the team photocopied the marked money for evidence purposes.

He also said the Dangerous Drugs Act does not make the presentation of marked money and fake buy-bust money vital to prosecution.

A PDEA agent who testified before the committee said an inventory of the confiscated drugs was not conducted immediately because the arrest where the supposed buy-bust occurred was dark.

Bribery charges

The PDEA caught the Malung Boys allegedly peddling fentanyl pills in a sting operation last September but the charges were dismissed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) investigating panel led by Zuño after three months for insufficiency of evidence.

The dismissal led to charges of bribery by the PDEA which prompted President Macapagal-Arroyo to order the "Malung Boys" held in jail while the case was re-investigated.

According to "intelligence reports" received by anti-narcotics agents, "P80 million changed hands" for the release of the three young men still under PDEA custody.

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Breastfeeding's importance to be taught in school

By Philip C. Tubeza

STARTING NEXT SCHOOL year, the Department of Education (DepEd) will include the importance and benefits of breastfeeding in its curriculum for elementary and high school students, according to Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

Lapus said the importance of breastfeeding will be taught under Edukasyong Pantahan or Pangkabuhayan in elementary students and Investigatory Project in Home Economics for secondary pupils as part of the National Plan of Action on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).

"Breastfeeding must be taken seriously because it addresses many societal issues such as food security, preventive medicine, ecology, economy, science, empowerment, love and faith," Lapus said.

Lapus and Dr. Elvira L. Reyneres-Espares, director of Children for Breastfeeding Inc. (CBI), a nongovernment organization, recently signed an agreement to push the IYCF and the inclusion of breastfeeding in the curriculum.

The campaign will tap the 44 lactating role models. Milanie Perdog, who at 16 became the youngest woman ever lauds graduate of UP Diliman, 2007, meets Aurelio A. Gentile, a UP college scholar and a UP Singing Ambassador; rubber engineer, and the Tagalo Bonbon Lacson collectively as Superstars, Voices and Mothers.

All were breastfed from birth.

They will be joined by Juana Bella, a German doctor-volunteer inside the Philippines her home. Both has breastfed her two children in tandem from birth to the present.

The breastfeeding policy is part of President Macapagal-Arroyo's hunger mitigation campaign because it is the most "far-reaching and cheapest strategy for the elimination of poverty."

"Breast milk, studies confirm, ensures the life-long health and well-being, emotional stability and intellectual development of future generations," Lapus said.

"We will also mobilize our school health and nutrition personnel to communicate/disseminate the importance of IYCF and breastfeeding to students, teachers and parents," he added.

Reyneres-Espares and her NGO is promoting a campaign on "The Seven Arts of Kindness" to instill social consciousness and responsibility to young children to provide family support to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

"The Seven Arts of Kindness is that the major issues that breastfeeding addresses: Food security, potent medicine, economy, ecology, empowerment, love and faith," she explained. These seven lessons children are encouraged to perform acts of kindness for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers," the CBI said in its website, Breastfeeding Philippines.

In collaboration with the DepEd, CBI will conduct advocacy seminars to be conducted in selected schools. It will prepare instructional materials which will be used in selected pilot schools.

DepEd and the CBI will also celebrate National Breastfeeding Awareness Month every August and World Breastfeeding Week on Aug. 1-7 in all public schools in accordance with Presidential Proclamation 1113.

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Short people may join the Army now

THE MILITARY HAS SOWERED ITS HEIGHT requirement for recruits to attract shorter people who may have the technical skills it requires of soldiers, an officer said.

Starting skills were minors, the Philippine Army now welcomes men and women at least 5 feet or 1.52 meters tall. Formerly the minimum height was 5 feet, 4 inches by men and 5 feet, 2 inches for women.

Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner Jr. said yesterday the revised height standards have been approved for implementation in all the service commands.

"We have seen it many times. Applicants who are not qualified can funnel away because of their height but not their weight impediment. They had better skills than those who were taller," Brawner said.

Brawner said the former height requirements might have been related to an individual's carrying capacity. Soldiers carried heavy packs with ammunitions, food and other requirements in their backpacks.

Besides the minimum height, soldier applicants must be at least 18 years but not more than 23 years old by the start of training on April 1, 2009. They should be single and high school graduates with some vocational skills. They're Dickensonian with a report from AFP

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Teachers rap automatic pay deduction by GSIS

By Philip C. Tubeza

A GROUP OF MILitant teachers has launched a campaign to scrap what it said was the illegal practice of automatic salary deductions from public school teachers' watch making unions with the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS).

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), meeting in Cebu on Saturday, said the nationwide "GSIS Robin Hood" campaign will involve the filing of a lawsuit to nullify the automatic deduction policy, a demand for a refund of all deductions illegally made against members, and the prosecution of GSIS officials responsible for the policy.

In a RESOLUTION, ACT national chairman Antonio Tinio said the automatic deduction policy known as the Claims and Loans Interdependency Policy or CLIP, introduced by GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia, "tramples on the rights of members to due process and to their rights as the GSIS law itself."

Legal suit

Tinio cited Section 41(e) of the GSIS Act of 1997 which stipulates that the GSIS board of trustees must file a legal suit before the proper court or body in order to recover any amount incurred by its members.

This process, he said, provides members with an opportunity to challenge or disprove claims made by the GSIS against them.

"On the other hand, the automatic deduction policy is unilateral, summary, and not subject to appeal. It violates the members' right to due process," he said.

He urged all public school teachers, who comprise over a third of GSIS members, to join the fight against the automatic deduction policy.

Tinio said the policy was made easier target by the "shoddy state of GSIS records [and] inconsistencies."

"The GSIS, he said, is a notorious for maintaining an incomplete and erroneous membership database. He claimed that "the GSIS itself acknowledges that it is currently engaged in a massive 'reprocessing' project to bring them up to date.

Flawed database

"At this does not keep it from using this flawed database to deduct alleged arrears," Tinio added.

"In most cases these so-called premiums in arrears are false, merely due to roll of its failure to post premium payments. Members are thus subjected to double deductions," he said.

Tinio cited the case of a teacher in Tarlac who was entitled to a maturity claim of P95,135.44 but who only received P50,889.72 after the GSIS automatically deducted P42,295.72 in alleged premium arrears.

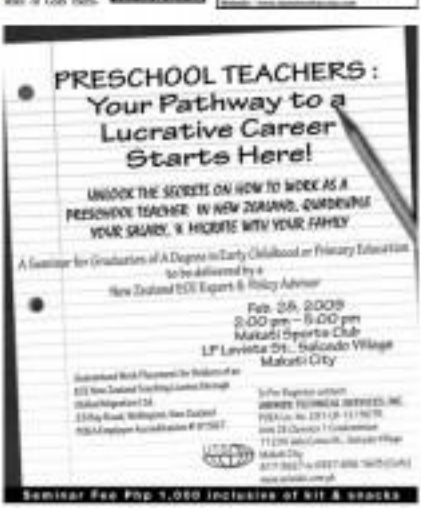
"This case is typical, it's happening to 8,000 members all over the country, and it's one of the main reasons there's such widespread anger against the GSIS," Tinio said.

Billions earned

Garcia, he said, was fond of crediting the billions of pesos in earnings made by the GSIS under his stewardship. "The issue is that most of it has been made through illegal deductions from the benefits of members."

"Our ACT chapters nationwide are giving our forms that will help teachers victimized by CLIP to document their experience," he said.

"Even though Cebu is the political stronghold of the Garcias, our leaders of Cebu are united in condemning the unjust and illegal policies of the GSIS," said ACT Cebu City chapter chair William Abando.



Young Pinoy artists told: Be cultural caregivers

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—YOUNG FILIPINOS HAS never told a new work experience to their cultural caregiver.

That's the task a Davao poet gave about 2,000 young artists who joined the second Dating Kasadyang Dumahanon (National South Arts festival) held last week at Teachers' Camp here.

Being "culture is your future," Dakila Rosarian, director general of the International Theater Institute of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), ordered the participating "youths (culture) caregivers" on the presiding of Cecile Guidote-Alvarez, who coined the phrase.

Schools of living traditions

Alvarez, executive director of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), told The Task requires young Filipinos to "nurture and respect your rights, your folklore, your historical experiences [in order to promote] inter-generational equity."

The festival was designed as a learning ground between government-funded schools for the arts and NCCA-supported "schools of living traditions" to fulfill this mandate, she said.

Chants, terracing techniques

The schools for the arts train students in various artistic disciplines while the NCCA acclaimed schools of living traditions collect indigenous knowledge by encouraging expertise in fields such as chants or the rice terracing technique of Ifugao.

Alvarez said she and Rosarian hope to showcase a merging of these academic principles as "a global model of what the arts can do for peace, social justice and sustainable development."

This is achieved "not by compulsion but by persuasion [and] not by weapons. Build up but by mobilizing local creative resources," she said.

Culture has taken a bedroom in the government's development agenda for years, Alvarez said, but the state now recognizes the fact that "culture is the human capital—the wealth of our country.... [that] allows us to move anywhere."

A force for peace

She described the festival as a bridge which fuses "fresh culture" into the mandate of the Department of Education, The agency used to be called the Department of Education, Culture and Sports.

Alvarez told festival participants that culture helps shape understanding and compassion, which leads to quest for peace.

She said the young artists demonstrated the "powers of the arts as a source of education."

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Rural training won't help nurses go abroad, say labor exporters

By Jerome Aning

A LABOR RECRUITING GROUP yesterday called on the government to reconsider a program under which nurses will be sent to the provinces to gain experience aimed at lessening their deployment overseas.

The Federated Associations of Manpower Exporters Direct said the P600 million allotted by the government for the Nurses Assigned to Rural Areas (Nurses) program this year for "a waste of taxpayer money" since the "required stint" the nurses would get in the provinces might not be recognized abroad.

Pame ore, president Juliana Gan, in a statement, noted that under the Nurses, nurses will conduct physical examinations, subsidiary injections and treat minor wounds in barangay clinics and municipal hospitals.

Specialized nurses

Gan said hospitals abroad need and require nurses to be "specialists in" such as surgery, burns, neonatal care, cardiac catheterization, cardiovascular diseases, pediatrics and anesthesiology, as well as in emergency response, therapies and clinical trials.

Such specialized nurses, he said, were "very much welcomed" in such countries

HOW GREEN IS MY TERRACE: To save key agricultural heritage systems, the Food and Agriculture Organization has included the 20,000-hectare man-made Ifugao rice terraces in its worldwide initiative. AFP/TED ALJIBE

Rice terraces put on list of farm sites to be saved

By Delmar Cadiz
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE RICE TERRACES in the Ifugao rice terraces has been given a boost after the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) identified the site as one of six pilot areas for its Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) project.

The project implements policies and programs that recognize indigenous agricultural practices and sees the world that have contributed to food security and have kept native farming communities together for centuries, said Dr. Parviz Koohafkan, FAO's GIAHS global coordinator.

The Ifugao rice terraces, he said, are chosen from more than 2000 indigenous systems worldwide.

"It's a miracle. The ingenuity of the Ifugao's agriculture system has proven that it should be substantially managed. I am convinced the rice terraces is one of the most important agricultural heritage systems," Koohafkan said.

What amazed the FAO rather in officials visited the Ifugao rice terraces, he said, was "the fantastic adaptive capability of the system ... and its resiliency to environmental change."

Other pilot areas

The five other pilot GIAHS areas are the farms of Java's Sambo mountains, Chile's agriculture systems in Chiloe province, China's rice-fish system in Zhejiang province, Morocco's oasis in Draa-Tafi, and Italy's historic pergolas, chestnut wind-breaks, stone walls and ancient terracotta.

These areas will get $1.5 million each from the project for the first five years (2008-2014), consists of FAO's partners, the Global Environmental Facility.

Koohafkan, together with Rasoyoki Imamura, FAO's Philippine representative, urged environment and Ifugao officials to implement action programs earlier formulated to stop the deterioration of the terraces' biodiversity and as well as its watersheds.

He said the GIAHS aims to create a different kind of classification for indigenous agricultural systems that need to be brought to the attention of global agricultural and economic communities.

Value of indigenous system

The Ifugao rice terraces is a world heritage site, Koohafkan said, "but that's based on its beauty as a landscape."

The GIAHS, he said, was different as it focuses on the site's indigenous system. It does not push for better production or good agricultural practices. Instead, it advocates the improvement of livelihood in farming communities that manage to contribute to food security using indigenous systems.

Like the Ifugao rice terraces, Koohafkan said there were a lot of "small land holders in a fragile ecosystem" that need to be protected.

Being small, these communities have been overlooked by national programs that focus on food production on large-scale farms. There are some 2 billion small farm holders in the world surviving on less than $2 (P96) a day, he said, citing World Bank studies.

Evergreen revolution

He urged governments that want all-out for mass food production through the green revolution formula.

"The approach should be 'evergreen' and not 'green revolution,'" Koohafkan stressed.

He said the green revolution had led to the use of chemical farm inputs that destroy soil fertility and the disregarding of practices that lead to food security through traditional farming systems.

Because of the rice terraces, Koohafkan said a bowl was developed between people and nature.

This shows that agriculture would always have a cultural component, he said.

Analiza Teh, Department of Environment and Natural Resources assistant secretary, said the inclusion of the Ifugao rice terraces in the GIAHS came after a series of consultations with local farmers and environment officials.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, February 16, 2009
6th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Gen 4:1-15, 25
Gospel: Mk 8:11-13

The Pharisees came and started to argue with Jesus. Hoping to entrap him, they asked for some heavenly sign. Then his spirit was moved. He gave a deep sigh and said, "Why do the people of this generation ask for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this people." Then he left them, got into the boat again and went to the other side of the lake.

Commentary:

Luke Timothy Johnson

Jesus refuses to give the Pharisees a sign. Why? Because they have already been given all the signs they need. Jesus' entire ministry has been a sign. Jesus' healings, his exorcisms, his teaching, his table fellowship with sinners, his compassion for the poor, his forgiveness of sinners, his challenge to the rich, his confrontation with the powers, his prophetic denunciation of the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, his welcoming of children, his inclusion of women, his parables, his proverbs, his aphorisms, his beatitudes, his woes, his death, his resurrection—all of these are signs. They are signs that God is present in Jesus, that God is working through Jesus, that God is saving the world through Jesus. They are signs that God is bringing the kingdom of God to earth through Jesus. They are signs that God is fulfilling the promises of the prophets through Jesus. They are signs that God is creating a new people of God through Jesus. They are signs that God is offering forgiveness of sins through Jesus. They are signs that God is reconciling the world to himself through Jesus. They are signs that God is making all things new through Jesus. They are signs that God is bringing the kingdom of God to earth through Jesus. They are signs that God is fulfilling the promises of the prophets through Jesus. They are signs that God is creating a new people of God through Jesus. They are signs that God is offering forgiveness of sins through Jesus. They are signs that God is reconciling the world to himself through Jesus. They are signs that God is making all things new through Jesus.

Let us now hear that we must remember we are not without guilt ourselves. If we look at it without prejudice, every kind of crime we make is therefore serious each of us commits. When we sin and are guilt-ridden, if we begin denying the sin or if something surrounding it surrounds, then we are guilty of the sin of Cain: that of impudence before God. All our knowledge, all our experience, all we have, in God given and demands a return to the form of service rendered to others.

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OPINION

Miriam sings the blues

EDITORIAL

LET'S PLAY "NAME THAT TUNE," OR RATHER, A political version of the game, paying attention to the singers, not the song. Who sang this aria, early in February? "The World Bank report, coming from a respected world agency, should be taken at face value. Under our Rules of Court, we have to presume that it has performed its official duty on the regular manner." Yes, Miriam Defensor Santiago, of course, in her best imitation of an operatic tenor. (That absurd insistence on the Rules of Court as the only guide for a legislator ought to be detailed *ipsissimis.*)

Now, who sang the following passage, a mere week later? "What is the World Bank anyway? It is merely a repetitor on Philippine territory. There is no headquarters agreement between our country and the World Bank." Why, Santiago again, but this time dripping with contempt for what used to be (only a week previously) a "respected world agency" (like also mentioned other shortcomings, character flaws aside) of the Bank. The Washington, DC-based institution does have an office, but it was disorienting to hear them entertained by someone who only a few days previously had sung its praises.

But the feisty senator, whose "iron-willed" conduct (in our own story described it) of the Senate economic affairs committee's investigation into the World Bank ban on certain contractors provided some amusement to a scandal-weary public, now has the Bank in her sights. For what? Apparently for the crime of—how do we say this?—wounding Santiago's pride. The senator had requested Bert Hofman, the Bank's Philippine country director, for a copy of the World Bank reports, but was rebuffed. "How dare Mr. Hofman say that there is corruption in the Philippines [and refuse] to give us at least the original documents?" Santiago sang.

There are rumors here that Santiago's from-hero-to-villain interpretation of the Bank's actions misses. We will get to that in the coda soon enough.

But back to the game. Try this one, from Jan. 22: "Under international law, the House of Representatives has no power to compel the presence and testimony of the World Bank officials." That's Santiago, warning the other chamber (which the same commodity described as inhabited by the gun-toting congressmen) that it was in danger of falling afoul of the required "prudence" if it issued subpoenas to World Bank officials. (The head line of her press release was unencouraging: "Malone warns House on WB status.")

Last week, however, another song for the choirs. "Mr. Hofman must come here [to the Senate] or else we'll use him for contempt." The singer? The chairman of Quezon City, Santiago's backyard.

When Santiago's second chair the Senate probe into the World Bank blacklist might be taken away from her committee, she launched a furious tirade on the Senate floor. She sneered, as she always does, in a caricature of her career as a comedic harpy-ess. "Despite these overbearish that I am so feared to recite, there is now a move to prevent me from presiding as a pinayana [a Filipina] hunting on the black-listed World Bank contractors," she told in a privilege speech. "If my critics wish to vaporize or neutralize me, that is their responsible decision. But it is a deliberate matter if my own colleagues wish to turn me into a monkey who sees nothing, hears nothing and says nothing."

But what, in fact, has happened to Santiago since the inquiry began? After condemning the contractors as the center of the controversy and celebrating the congressmen for daring to censure the contractors from the record, she has cried out gladly to complain the transfer, parking the contentious right in the periphery. Now, under her chairmanship, the Senate committee has zeroed in on the administration which had the temerity to describe some Philippine political practices as corrupt.

"How convenient it is a country whose many things are for sale, including men's souls." That plaintive lament should be familiar to Santiago; it's a line from her previous speech.

Now, the coda: It is passing strange that Santiago and Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile should take the World Bank to task, for not meeting Philippine standards of evidence. The Bank's duty was to safeguard the money it handled: once rumors of collusion had been verified, according to its own lights, a cancelled a loan. How dare it prudence, the kind we do not have enough of in Philippine politics.

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LRTA facing syndicated estafa suit

WHEN PATYLIST RED MELCHOR L. PAGSA asked at a congressional hearing why the Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) bought 48 "trains" when construction of the rails on which they would roll has not even started yet, the answer came amid but the new counters aren't to increase the passenger capacity of the LRTA, nor for the LRT extension to Cavite. (The proposal of the extension, Javelin of Canada, had pulled out of the project.) These counters, LRTA president Orlando Rebles said, have been rolling for the past two years, doubling the passenger capacity of the LRTA. The 48 counters cost $11.6 million.

The answer was not good enough for the committee, esp. Raul Roco said that the Metro Rail Transit Corp. (MRTC) has the highest passenger capacity with only 72 coaches, while the LRT has 120 coaches plus 27, plus the 48 new coaches. Each LRT coach, he said, has a capacity of 1,20 passengers, which is 44 percent bigger than an MRT coach.

The numbers don't add up, Deus said, and only proves that LRTA officials were living in the dreaming and "their press releases that all train coaches have been rolling for the past three years" were false. The 48 coaches, he said, were ordered by the [now] 187 commuters.

Pagsa added that only two weeks ago he saw at least 20 counters gathering dust in the LRTA depot in Roma, Pasay City. He said, but only when the count on the trains coaches stopped up were the trains immediately increased.

As I see it, if the coaches were bought to relieve passengers of the tension corroding in the elevated rails, and not for some officials to benefit from an extra piece or his kinder, then it was OK. I myself accuse a colonel taking why the LRT and the MRT do not sold coaches considering that passengers are already packed like sardines in the coaches and more comes get rides because the coaches are already full. After all, the purpose of the elevated rails was to replace the buses, jeepneys and other vehicles clogging the streets below. So has they have not been able to do that, simply because

Neal H. Cruz

AS I SEE IT

the elevated trains are crowded.

Besides, with more passengers, the elevated rails will soon start sag. The government won't have to subsidize them from taxpayers' money.

What's more, the rails stop service at 11 or 11:30 p.m., leaving workers, including women, who get off work late, red-less—and then they have to get home via buses and jeepneys whose they run the risk of being held up. Hint, more trains, the rails don't have to be so tough, such can extend their services to well after midnight. Then jeepneys don't have to serve the public after all.

If the LRTA has an excess of trains, who doesn't a head or tail come to the Metro Rail where, in our dense foot (or, correspondingly a crowd)? But Transit could the rails of LRTA and Metro Rail are of different widths, so the coaches for one won't fit or not go to the other. That shows the lack of foresight of our government planners.

Even so, that won't be the end of the LRTA problems. I understand that a suit will be filed against the LRTA for arbitrating on the oversight of a private company. The Filipinas Overlay Bldg. Systems, or Filsystems, is studying a criminal complaint of syndicated estafa against LRTA president Rebles and other LRTA officials for copying the Filsystems plans of the LRT extension to Manila terminus registered under Certificate No. 1,000 on April 24, 2000.

Lawyer Alfred Reyes, spokesman of Filsystems, said that his company submitted as an unsolicited bid proposal back in July 2, 2004 to the LRTA, complete with feasibility study etc.

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What's worse, in the Nov. 29, 2006 Cabinet meeting, Rebles passed off as the LRTA's own a power point presentation of the LRT extension project that was the very same copyrighted Filsystems design," Reyes said.

The Nov. 24, 2006 LRTA document which was exposed in the House hearing revealed that the LRTA was asking the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) $1 million for the design consultancy and supervision fee as part of the P6.6 million fee to supervise the project. Reyes said that they did bad no design except documents and merely used the pasted pics word by.

He said that the industry practice is a 1 percent supervision fee, so that the $1.65 million fee fee should be $1.2 million, in contrast to the requested budget of P6.6 million fee supervision, which is eight times more.

He added that the detailed design would be provided by the winning bidder based on the design concept given by the LRTA at the time of solicitation. But since the design concept was supposed to be submitted by Filsystems in fact to the LRTA a quasi-public, Reyes said.

He stressed that Filsystems, contrary to Rebles' claims, did not lose in the bidding because the company was already disqualified in the pre-bidding stage of the project.

In a 2004 Filsystems one-and-a-half years and new P300 million to complete the feasibility study and design concept for the LRT 1 extension, the company would ask a 1.5 percent royalty payment for the whole project amount—up to $11.25 million.

Filsystems was disqualified in the bidding for Package A-1. Filsystems was disqualified for submitting a nominally filed income tax return, while the other potential bidder, China State Construction Group Co. Ltd. was allowed to submit a nominally filed return in the pre-bid conference questions and answers period.

Why Mike Arroyo is not Jesus Christ

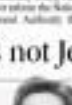
HIS HUMBLE WAIT TO BE CLEARED BY MAKING him appear in the Senate hearing in An Angle case, says Mike Arroyo. (Which makes his case, not to be partials, in the eyes of the public, for there is another wrong.) He says further that having been raised in one man after another dorsed, make him monumentally corrupt, a rather lazy monumentally preserved. What his wife took on that task, a congressman was raised to say that his wife was just like Jesus Christ. Without waiting for another congressman to say the same thing about him, I hasten to write the piece.

Mike Arroyo is not Jesus Christ because:

JC is the Second Person in the Holy Trinity. PG is the First Gentleman in the Catholic Couple. JC's riches are not of this earth. PG's riches are out of this world. When JC was born, a bright star shone in the sky and the Three Wise Men followed it offering gold, frankincense and myrrh to newborn. When PG was born—or so the legend goes—the stars dimmed and the Three Wise Men stopped their gold, frankincense and myrrh to collect the coupons of a new gas station.

JC told his disciples, "Leave all your possessions and follow me." PG tells his countrymen, "Invest all your possessions." Before JC began his public life, he went to the desert to fast, and there he was offered by the devil all sorts of temptations, all of which he refused, rebuking the Tempter, "Be gone from me, serpent of sin." Before PG began his public life, he went to the Nevada desert to fast too and there was offered by the Devil all sorts of temptations. He succumbed to them and the serpent of sin replied, "Aaah enough." If Juan de Nieves is to be believed though, PGhas his own version of "Be gone from me, accursed one," which is, "Back off."

When JC saw the temple metabolites all sorts of moneychanges and hustlers, he became his true self, flicked on those, drove them out. His temple is a house of prayer, but you have made it "a den of robbers!" When PG saw Jun Lozada testifying at the Senate, he became furious and



Conrado de Quiroz

THERE'S THE RUB

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JC said "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God's what is God's." PG says, "Give unto me what is mine and to Pidal what is Pidal's."

JC had he has only to comfort him from Magdalene, a woman who might or might not have been ordered from the world's oldest profession but who possessed a heart of gold. PG has by his side Miriam Santiago, a woman did not feel sympathy in the world's oldest profession (Investigating of course, what did you think?) and who possesses a heart that works evidently like a Casper sounds when it senses gold.

When JC entered Jerusalem, the people lined his path waving palm fronds and shouting joyously, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" When PG encountered his senate attending the hearing, people lined the streets to see him because their lives depended, preparing to throw them to his direction shouting, "Here's your welcome gift, you stug!" JC was betrayed by Judas located for 30 pieces of silver. PG is protected by Congress for more than 30 pieces of silver, risking into account inflation over the last two thousand and some years.

When JC was arrested, his true apostle, Peter, denied him three times, crying "I do not know this man." He was easily easy silver-tested and went on to become a martyr. When PG was arrested, his best apostle, JPE, who denied being there at all, went on to become a strong friend his three times, saying, "I know this man, he is the husband of the woman I once goaded the Erap crowd to signal-signal! I repent

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How to win an election

COMMENTARY

Dennis Murphy

Obama got far more money from ordinary Americans than any other candidate because he made special efforts to ask them to help. In the end he had as many as small amounts from 2.5 million people. Each of these donors became in some ways a campaign worker or donor always do: they came to make sure their money isn't wasted. Imagine if 5 million volunteers campaigned for you. He always worked best when it gets the money for his activities from the people.

Reasons discussed the essence of Obama's campaign platform. He said the candidate left a vacuum because of desperate to find out what the people wanted and then made it part of his platform. There is nothing wrong in hearing one's actions on what path will a candidate the people want, so Obama went along, he found the demand for change was the overriding wish of the people, so that became the motif. "Change, we can use." (O ingatlan) gan Obama's campaign was based on a bottom-up approach so to come to the people with a platform already worked out in advance by a party or the president or some technocrats.

Finally Obama paid poor people who took a day off from work just to help him. He had never seen people working for him for no money for.

One final weakness of Obama and communist's organizing help a candidate win here in 2010? The essential thing, according to Obama, is that the candidate must be able to make the big majority dependable votes in the Philippines are poor or what can be called mass votes, before the candidate runs and he requires to form and shore their values. To share their values and care for the poor and near-poor, the "D" and "E" categories of the pollsters, the candidate must get to know them as well as Obama did in the slums of Chicago in slums. He or she must visit the poor, learn their issues, talk about them to them and champion their causes or demands.

The candidate who travels this path will be outside the existing party structures, and will have to form his own party. Obama did not rely on the party structure for his campaign structure or finance for his issues. The candidate, like Obama, should pick the best people outside the existing political structures, people trusted because they live mostly from the poor and near-poor. The candidate should give them freedom and exploit their originality, let them be themselves, give them room to be creative and innovative.

He or she would do well to seek the money needed from the poor and near-poor and from well-off people who believe in reform as Obama did. In the region Obama downplayed the value of TV and other costly campaigning techniques. The biggest mistake one can make in the Philippines is to spend one's pure, he said, on TV or the print. In the Philippines it's faulty and dumb for mayor and people's, according to an Ateneo de Manila professor of Philippine Culture study of influences on voters in the 2001 election. This means, it seems, that the candidate must rely on voters' own groups of the poor and near-poor and celebrities, and the Church and other religious leaders, that he or she really thinks their values and it deeply concerned about their welfare. The campaign will only succeed if the candidate only does those things which are necessary to build a coalition on this, the campaign will spread. Witness the success of Cesario Aquino in 1986.

CO and the form of campaigning Obama championed are good examples of democracy in action. It could work here.

Dennis Murphy works with the 10 best Four Americans. His e-mail address is opinion@philstar.net

The morning after Israel's vote

WORLD VIEW

Janice Oz-Salzberger

Israel's proportional system of elections, which has improved prophesies of doom and resurged as the only stable party with an optimistic and peace-seeking message.

The two front-runners, Kadima leader Tzipi Livni and Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, got 11 seats for his head. Ehud Barak's Labor party, in the wake of the Gaza war Lebanese conflict took a beating. Shas, demanding "Judaism is one of loyalty" from Israel's Arab citizens. The 10 seats Yisrael Beiteinu, led by Avigdor Lieberman, propping the under-performing Netanyahu with could eight-of-seats bloc.

Ehud Barak's Labor follows with a 13-seat loss. Barak is known up next Kadima. Likud, or both. Labor will hold to cool-seat long in the desert. It will end the old, time-worn, as the Israeli people, both doves and hawks are capable phenomena.

If the number seats to qualify for the many players, here's the catch. Haaretz's 120 seat will fill up with smaller parties, each competing anything from two- to 11-seat Knesset. Arab parties are wrong there, as well as Judaism of The Jet right and left. Thus, have Haaretz been compared from Israel's beginning the manner the system. Never before, however, have the many parties subsisted as many.

Tzipi Livni or Netanyahu be called by President Shimon Peres and charged with building a new government? Peres, unwanted political wizard that he is, could give his largely convenient role a fresh edge by helping all sides out of the muddle.

Peres could, for example, make both Livni and Netanyahu offer him their support in writing for various formats. Thus, Israel might stumble out of the present political mud through job-sharing at the top. Alternatively, Livni could surrender victory to Netanyahu despite her small electoral advantage, serve in his government, and put her weight at least at moderation.

Livni, at last widely accepted as a leader worth her salt, spoke loudly of peace with the Palestinian as in the last day of her campaign. It did her no harm at the ballot box. She embodies this image powerfully as the first election Middle Israeli a dove and hope, though not as effective as it could be. Ed Asner, who voted Livni and Left of her, should loudly be able to stand up to Jerusalem, who voted Netanyahu and Right of him. This election may sound a wake-up call to the moderates, and Livni may be the one to answer.

Even more important is the constitutional wake-up call. All three major leaders now agree on the need to reverse the run-down political system. Even Israelis, they say, should be able to work in a two-party system, or three parties. To do so, they admit, they must change the law.

Israel must learn to speak in brave political tongues. It's the only way out of a dangerous historical moment. Its democracy would not grow weaker by becoming calmer and more peaceful. It would grow up. Fewer elections per generation the hallmark of maturity and not only of politics.

Is it doable? Yes. Plans for constitutional reform are already on the table. The bigger parties must agree to the needed measures. If they cannot agree, go back to the drawing board and raise the Knesset entry level substantially.

Peace will have to compromise, replacing total-ends-make-parties with a couple of solid, off-the-shelf options. Prime ministers will be able to work for peace, and their decisions will stick. Difficult decisions will at last be made rather than quickly postponed. Only then would Israel be able to speak to the world, especially to its Arab neighbors, in a clear and practical voice. I hope, but cannot promise, that it would be the well-tempered voice of Middle Israel.

Project Syndicate

Janice Oz-Salzberger is chair of Modern Israel Studies at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, and director of the Haim Herzog Institute for Political Thought at the University of Haifa, Israel.

Guns, goons and gold

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

before elections. There's a noticeable increase in hard celebrities and an escalation in rhetoric. Sometimes, however, it seems something deeds gone sour. The hobbyist of politics being money, which serves in the great leader tell others he can be overcome by piling on the cards, and the traditional source of campaign contributions, businessmen, being put off by the high cost of campaigns, have turned to find alternative sources of funding for their campaigns. Essentially, as Filipino businessmen have discovered they can go on vacation during the campaign season, and that avoid fundraising is mainly to politicians, the more money a candidate has to spend, the more likely he is to campaign funds by means of robberies or accepting funds from gambling lords and drug dealers.

This was explained to me by partisans (and administrators as other such things, who told me in 2007 that the senate Impeachment case afford to go home and not to make rounds of the business as that they are no longer at the mercy of the politicians the way they used to be. The use of money continue a long time, for example, and the old rogue Marcelo Fernan for the services of pioneer and soldiers that he could not be bothered to pay him.

Major funds down the primary season of political funding as follows: (1) living money; (2) fundraising events; (3) donations in cash or and the Bureau of Internal Revenue; (4) The Philippine Sweepstakes Office.

According to Magno, politicians are really in a low-tone situation. Elections are getting even more expensive, but there simply isn't enough money coming in to finance them. So, he says, the real kingpins in politics are those with illegal funds who can afford to bail out candidates who are in trouble but can be other hand, it's obvious funding businessmen who still finished campaigns—the Eduardo Cojuangcos, Ramons, Abrahams, Lucio Tans...keeping in be in industries where their businesses is most vulnerable to government regulatory processes.

Fifteen proposals were made for government to actually subsidize political parties, the idea was to thoroughly entangled in the administration's push for Charter change that neither Charter change itself nor other proposals to reform the political system got beyond the fence partisan differences of administration versus opposition, which sets in many cases a threshold between administration representatives of a filibuster on the one party parliamentary system and the public's preferences for the presidential, bicameral system. When public opinion demanded Jose Rizal's for reforming the political and social system, administrative entities led efforts to set only reform the political system filled out.

The administration's unquestioned dominance in the lower house and in the Senate negligible blocs of the opposition have given the Arroyo White House the power and pass legislation conducive to making political candidacy less expensive, opening up local and national government to new blood.

A first step could have been to review the campaign ad ban, taking big money out of the media. Campaigns are expensive, but the political parties and voters' fatigue. A second step would have been to give political parties a fighting chance by reinstituting the voting values system—or even a straight ticket, providing an incentive for candidates to associate with a party. The third step would have been party legislation challenging the Pangasinan formula which currently makes the party list system a joke. And the fourth would have been to carve some sort of political charity legislation (the simpler, the better) on a rule to simple to bring only one member of any given family to the legislature or the executive in any given territory.

But since the administration was engaged in a campaign to have it undermined, the result is that the Philippines is the only country in the world where the political system is more corrupt than the people who run it. Ironically, the only reform that has been implemented is the one that has made it more difficult for the people to vote: the automated election system.

Until the political system is reformed, the country will remain a place where the only way to get ahead is to get rich, and the only way to get rich is to get into politics.

Manuel L. Quezon III is a columnist for the Philippine Daily Inquirer and the Philippine Star. He is also a blogger at www.quezon.ph.

Waiting in the wings

THIS FRIDAY THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF PHILSCONST Military Academy class of 1969 will gather at Fort Del Pilar in Baguio City to mark one of the most significant milestones in the life of any association. PMA team-age (they entered the Academy, some 40 strong. Only 30 would make it to graduation, one of the smallest contingents ever to finish the grueling course leading to a commission in the armed forces. Today, 27 are still in the service, 3 have died, and 10 are retired.

REVERLE

Manuel J. Lardizabal

Special notice on PMA is one.

In the history of the Academy only one individual graduated the 1st in the class and also ranked as first captain of the cadet corps. Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit, class of 1951, garnered both honors. Unfortunately, he would join ranks along with President Ramon Magsaysay in the 1957 crash of the presidential aircraft in Cebu. In that time, Bangit was serving as Magsaysay's aide-de-camp.

Only one individual served as first captain of the corps and went on to become AFP chief of staff. Gen. Romeo Espino, class of 1937, also served as commander of the First Scout Rangers Regiment and later, head of the Philippine Army before President Marcos installed him from retirement, appointing him AFP chief of staff in 1965. But his greatest achievement was the defeat of the Huks when Magsaysay defeated them as a colonel serving as deputy commander of the Second Military Area in 1947.

Only two individuals would graduate at the top of their respective classes and later serve as AFP chief of staff. Gen. Felipino Cruz was the top graduate of the class of 1958. He would be the only cadet to serve as chief of the Philippine Constabulary and the first cadet to become AFP chief of staff. He would serve together as the Finance Ministry under Prime Minister Cesar E.A. Virata. Two of Cadette and Lieutenant Jesus of the Finance Ministry Intelligence Bureau (FMIB). Gen. Manuel Eay was the valedictorian of class 1941. Aside from serving as AFP chief of staff he would also become ambassador to the United Nations, and I have seen as ambassador of Senegal-Gam.

* * *

As our class is about to celebrate its 50th year after graduation, another batch, the class of 2009, prepares to join the ranks of the AFP as commissioned officers.

There is a lot going on internally evening in the transition time to assume the reins of leadership in the AFP is not approaching. The present AFP chief of staff, Gen. Alexander Yano, class of 1979, is relatively new, barely two months more, if possible successor is Army Commander Lt. Gen. Victor Ibrado, who has the same batch as Yano. Ibrado returns to Manila after serving as Army chief. Other names contended by the President as was the case with Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. Galibeb, Esperon's commander was a special case.

Looming in the background and casting a long shadow over the whole proceedings is Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit. A member of class of 1951, Bangit is currently the Joint Task Force Command (SOLCOM) chief. His long and close association with President Arroyo has as an assistant in the Office of the Vice President, then as aide-de-camp of the newly installed President, followed by assignment as Presidential Security Group (PSG) commander, makes him a close as he AFP chief of staff candidate and as a former AFP chief-of-staff. Bangit knows where all the skeletons are hidden and is familiar with the major players in the game. While his service reputation may be good, the reputation of his patron is more hardcore than blessing for Bangit.

The senior appointment of this character, Maj. Gen. Oscar Rabena, is commanding general, PAF, keeping close company generals in the organization, was more to prepare the way for Bangit. Assistant retired of Rabena's designation was held back until the very last to announce the affairs of said last brother. Let me add that Rabena is well-qualified and deserving to be nominated could emerge as AFP chief of staff in the 15th month of his term.

The class of 1979 ranked out with 299 graduates. Only 159 would graduate on 18 February 1979. At the head of the class was a Bagiuonan, Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dy, who is serving the commission. Brigadier Rhoden Angat would retire by cadet marshmaster, the first class to do so in the least. Angat is now chief of cadet staff at Philippine Navy headquarters. The Class of 1979 PCG. Vice Admiral Ariel Odchigue is also after serving his hitch.

In the 1982 and 1984 graduates, members of the class were key leaders of the opposing forces. A few would suffer incarceration and it would take some time before their return to the organization was possible. One who continued his active service was Gen. Danilo Lim, a Pilot Fighter and member of the 20th. Lim along with Senator Tolibano and others remain in detention in Camp Crame.

Today the class has one three-star general, 16 with two stars and three of one-star were holding various positions in the AFP.

As the nation approaches a critical stage in its history amid persistent calls for Charter change and elections in 2010, one must wonder if our fragile democracy can survive an armed forces under partisan leadership. What does loyalty to our country value preservation over personal loyalty to the commander-in-chief? In the absence of good governance, this is the crucial question that will be tested in the coming time, some 25 years ago a former Presidential Guards commander became AFP chief of staff. History is about to repeat itself. What does it hold for the nation?

For the members of our armed forces, discernment and vigilance remain the key guideposts.

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'Hellish roads' all over RP

COLUMNIST SEAN K. CRUZ HAS WRITTEN A most timely piece of journalism on the state of the roads in Eastern Samar, and he raises questions that require answers.

But why just Eastern Samar? Every part of the country must have similar unexplored stories. Here in the town to Gen. Nakar, which has been severed since 1990, there are three roads to the larger city. But only one is surfaced, and it is narrow and tends to attract wandering giant, dogs, cows and, occasionally, robbers. After a typhoon or downpour, this oversized road becomes even more hazardous with additional ruts due as well.

On Camiguin de Luzon, 95 percent of the roads are excellent, except for the area around the volcanic mineral springs. Perhaps there were funding difficulties?

Then there are the new bridges that have been built in Cagayan de Oro, but the approaches to those wonderful structures seem to have been overlooked.

There will always be problems to be lifted, but if they are not prioritized, they will always be the last to be attended to, until they become too big to ignore. Just keeping potholes filled would require an army of workers, but unfortunately that may not happen because the money to pay the workers may not be enough: the hours may be allocated, but their proper disbursement cannot be guaranteed.

Roads are essential infrastructure in any modern society; they need to be funded properly—and maintained. Taxpayers expect no less.

—ALLEN R. BRAGANZA
Block 19 Lot 19,
Solana Executive Subd.,
Cagayan de Oro City 9000

LETTERS

Dingras Church to be restored, not demolished

THIS IS IN REACTION TO AUGUSTO VILLalon's column regarding the reported demolition of the Dingras Church, which is located in my district, the second district of Ilocos Norte. (Inquirer, 2/3/09)

I would like to assure Villalon that the historic Dingras Church in Ilocos Norte will not be demolished but instead, a responsible restoration plan will be put in place not only to save the church but also other churches and historical sites in the province that need repair and rehabilitation.

I have talked with Dingras municipal officials and asked them to inform the parish not to proceed with the demolition pending the discussion with the public and other stakeholders.

There is a way to restore old structures and historical sites such as what the Indonesian government did with the Borobudur temples and the continuing restoration of the Angkor Wat complex by the Cambodian authorities.

I have allocated a portion of my development fund to a proposed restoration plan for all the designated historical sites in Ilocos Norte. Then, I call on the local business community, local and overseas, to assist in the effort.

Furthermore, I am also in touch with government agencies such as the Department of Tourism and the National Historical Institute to find ways by which a similar restoration project fund can be established to support current efforts to save our heritage sites.

—LEE FERDINAND "BONGBONG" MARCOS II,
Second District, Ilocos Norte

GSIS Dumaguete acting on Liz's complaint

THIS IS IN CONNECTION WITH CONCEPcion Zita Ancheta's letter (Inquirer, 2/10/09).

We would like to inform Ms. Liz that the pending issues she presents regarding her emergency loan is now being addressed by our Dumaguete branch office. Ms. Liz should have an update in the coming weeks.

As everybody knows, the Government Service Insurance System is upgrading its computerization program to improve the processing of benefits and claims. We apologize for the inconvenience that the upgrade may have caused some of our members and pensioners. Rest assured, however, that the upgrade is geared toward improving the service of the GSIS.

—ELIAS V. ALEMANIA,
vice president,
Public Relations and Communications Office,
Government Service Insurance System

'No rhyme and reason' in running for governor

I FEEL ALLUDED TO BY ONE OF THE SOPUS in Ramon Tulfo's Jan. 31 column. I have that Tulfo is a fair journalist.

In the interest, therefore, of fairness and balanced reporting, I would like to take exception to his allegation about the water destruction caused by an erstwhile logging billionaire in the ecologically sensitive province of Palawan. He says and that this billionaire is planning to run for governor of that province.

Two of the candidates vying for governor in Palawan, However, on their own accord and out of the goodness of their hearts, 11 of the 23 ecumenical mayors of Palawan have freely and voluntarily endorsed me and asked me to run for the governorship of the province. I am sure that is what I were come from hard work, other than love of country and the province of Palawan, I see no rhyme or reason why I should run for governor of Palawan.

It might interest Tulfo to know that without any solicitation—including the non-fictitious underground river issue No. 1 among the seven wonders of the world—which, under the law, would require only an SPA, the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for Palawan act would have not become a law at all. (For better appreciation of this act, please read Chapter 5 of the book on the SEP Law, "Caring for the Last Frontier, the SEP story," on sale by Fr. Shay Cullen, Bora Foundation Love.)

Finally, more Tulfo, I am not a fan of Robinsons because of his term in Batangas, I would like to ask him to allow me to have a chopper for haircut over his himself when I have done for the province, without Tulfo. Itching humility aside, the best haven't seen in the entire archipelago of the inconsequence of Bicol and Bicolano's Point.

If Tulfo has the time, I would also like to fly him to Barcia and Brooke's Point to see for himself what is forest destruction.

Let us continue to be vigilant in our forest cause but I hope Tulfo is not still for us concerned or I am.

Lastly, may I request Tulfo to tell me when he would like to take that "observation flight" and I will be most happy to show him conservation and protection at their best.

—ROBERT S. ARNEL

Paging Zubiri: Project will benefit wrong families

WE'VE BEEN LIVING FOR TWO YEARS NOW in a temporary shelter where everything is cohesive: not to mention the threats to security and peace that have prevented some settlers from going back to their farms and tend to their lot. So, we cannot leave the place because I have a casualty of landless who, right now is occupying one of the vacated units. Worse, last December, my mother underwent a 13-hour operation at the Capitol ng Maynila for metastasized breast cancer.

Because I am the family's only breadwinner, our resources have been exhausted, yet we are still indebted to several persons including the three doctors who did the operation. Because the relocation center is too far from Laguna City and Barangay Sta. Ana, Cabuyao, Laguna, where I live, so we won't have to go to and from the relocation center for my mother's continuing medications. My father is in the temporary shelter to take care of my sick brother, while my mother is with my sister and her family, and at times, with me when I am not in the Commission on Audit.

For us, renting is something more financially taxing than paying for the doctor's bills and the medicines my mother needs to take. We have recently heard that the office of Sen. Miguel Zubiri is sponsoring a project for people like us whose homes were swept away by the flood during typhoon Frank. Being in Batangas was like a delicious dish we never will have the chance to taste because the recently announced list of the project beneficiaries did not include us.

We are not blaming the source for this. It's simply that the matters pertaining to relocation, housing and so on and so forth, seems to be handled by irresponsible and unjust people who do not know the real score. Prone to malpractice. I heard that some of the beneficiaries still have good houses—concrete, two-story structures, far from the river—and therefore need no help.

While I think Senator Zubiri and his staff do not have anything to do with the lot, I think that it's their duty to check on the status of the families on the list and find out whether or not they need closure. I can very well say that they don't and I know why. Many people are blind because the answer to even the most grave of problems is right in front of their very eyes. I think my family and I need your close and will eventually help us too from the financial woes we have been in since typhoon Ruming hit us.

I cannot question the projects that government officials undertake for the people who need help, but with due care. I doubt the intention of the people behind the listing. We do hope something is done as soon as possible before another project like this crops up and the same thing happens and those who need help do not get anything at all.

—ROBERT R. SOPUNG,
adviser of the Rizal Inclusive
ville-kid public school of the
Philippine Summer Rizal School
Rizal Region Chapter

Long overdue: P940 pension finally released

PLEASE ACCEPT OUR HEARTIEST THANKS and gratitude for your assistance, specifically for publishing my letter about the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office. In that letter, I called attention to PVAO's going on the computerized, disorderly, 21st century. Then, after the letter's publication, my mother's "long overdue" pension was released and it helped a lot in paying for her hospitalization and our get-together.

To the Inquirer, thank you ever so much again. Hoping that my example will also benefit other "helpless" aged pensioners.

Please permit me God bless!

—CONCEPCION C. INFANTE,
Talisay City, Cebu
concepcioninfante@yahoo.com

Across the NATION

CHR head raises alarm over arbitrary arrests

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr., Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (CHR) HAS raised alarm over what it sees as a pattern of arbitrary arrests and the filing of criminal charges against activists by the police and military.

CHR Chair Leila de Lima said the commission would issue an advisory this week to call the attention of government agencies and institutions and the public on this practice.

"This is alarming because it chokes a person of expression through a 'legal offensive,'" De Lima told reporters in the sidelines of a seminar on human rights reporting sponsored by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility here.

The advisory will be issued to the Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Department of Justice, Supreme Court, Congress and other agencies.

While the number of killings of activists has dropped, De Lima said cases of arbitrary arrests and filing of nonbailable criminal cases against activists had increased.

She said those arrested "fit the profile of the usual victims of extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances."

The most number of arbitrary detentions and filing of cases against activists were recorded in Southern Tagalog, Central Luzon and in the Visayas.

In most cases, the activists are abducted and surfaced two or three days later with a police or military announcement that they have been arrested, according to De Lima.

But in several cases referred to the agency by human rights groups and other government organizations, the arrests violated procedures because the arrested were treated only after the activists were detained.

The activists do not undergo preliminary investigation or issued arrests of the warrantless, said De Lima.

This happened to the 27 activists who were arrested and charged with frustrated murder and arson for the burning of a Globe cell site in Lantapan, Bukidnon, in August last year, she said.

In some cases filed in court, De Lima said the hearings had been delayed through rescheduling of arraignment and hearings that had resulted to prolonged detention of the activists.

The arrests, she said, had been carried out "under the cloak of judicial processes" which gives them an apparent legitimacy.

But she said CHR would scrutinize these cases.

De Lima, during a speech at the seminar, said that extrajudicial killings had remained a common despite a drop in the number of cases.

The CHR has recorded 131 cases of extrajudicial killings from 2007 to 2008. The biggest number was recorded in Central Mindanao with 32 cases, followed by Southern Mindanao (19) and Eastern Visayas (21).

Almost all of the 197 victims were affiliated with militant groups and the killings were mostly attributed to the police and military, according to De Lima.

Although not as rampant as cases of extrajudicial killings, De Lima said the killings of journalists had remained unabated. The CHR has recorded eight killings of journalists in 2008 and 77 since 1986.

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES
A small "sari-sari" store in Plaza Lorenzo, Compostela Valley offers bonding services to those who stay behind—pen and refills running as these crying times.

DOLE allocates P17M for coconut workers

By Jess A. Galindez, Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE DEPARTMENT OF Labor and Employment has allocated P17 million to help workers in the coconut processing industry who might be displaced due to the global economic crisis.

Labor regional director Ferdie Pagsuyoin said on Wednesday that the amount would be used as counterpart for the wages of workers who would lose their jobs in coconut oil mills and be given jobs by local government units.

The P17 million will come from the agency's contingency fund, the DOLE Adjustment Measures Program Fund, Pagsuyoin said.

The global economic crisis has slowed down production in the coconut oil mills, which might result in retrenchment, he said.

Close to 1,000 people are employed in eight oil mills in Eastern Visayas. The mills have been exporting coconut oil to the United States and other countries.

But Pagsuyoin said five mills had yet to file oil workers.

On Monday, the official met with representatives from the coconut oil mills and the regional office of the Philippine Coconut Authority and informed them about the assistance program.

The local governments could hire the displaced workers for infrastructure projects, he said.

Several local governments were supporting the scheme. Those included Baybay town in Leyte, which has two coconut oil mills.

The DOLE has programs that also help displaced overseas Filipino workers through skills retraining, livelihood assistance and possible redeployment for those who still like to work abroad.

Officer surrenders 4 paramilitary men

By Fernan Olaguer, Inquirer Southern Luzon

NAGA, CAMARINES SUR—POLICE TOOK into custody four paramilitary men tagged in a robbery-holdup on Thursday that left two persons killed and three others wounded, one of them critically, in San Miguel town, 13 kilometers from here.

The suspects, all members of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) based in an Army camp of the 22nd Infantry Battalion, were surrendered by their commanding officer, 1st Lt. Jay Tiburcio Ignacio.

Of the four, only one was identified: Gilbert Dio, 29, the alleged leader and gunman.

Police said the Cafgu members flagged down a jeepney in Bolusa, San Miguel, at dawn and divested its four passengers of their valuables before shooting dead the driver, identified as Perfecto Bhodisa, 61.

The other fatality was identified as Edelenora Tanel, 50. She was later found with head wounds.

Tanel and the other victim—Ignacio Tevers, 70, father Olupaan, 32, and Tessie Wenano, 52—were headed to the yard of a pili processor to sell pili nuts to jump in to a 30-foot embankment toward a fast-flowing river.

Those survived Jun Olupaan, who suffered deep cuts and contusions, was taken to the Eastern Bicol Medical Center in Naga where she was given a 50-50 chance to survive.

According to police, the Cafgu men took a Nokia 1100 cell phone, IDs and cash amounting to P20,000.

Army Lt. Mike Gaoiran, commanding officer of the Army unit based at Camp Francisco Camacho, denied the involvement of the Cafgu men.

One of those involved, however, confessed to his commanding officers and pointed to Dio as the gunman, adding that they only went with him to get drunk.

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PNOC to plant jatropha in 100 hectares of land

By Vicente S. Labro
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—8 NOVEMBER—The state-owned Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC) will plant jatropha in 100 hectares of land in Leyte to help the province in its search for alternative fuel.

Ralph Solmayr, board director of Philippine National Oil Co. Alternative Fuels Corp. (PNOC-AFC), said the company was looking for idle land in Leyte for its biofuel crop plantation project.

Solmayr said the PNOC-AFC was into jatropha production in support of Republic Act No. 9367, or the Biofuels Act of 2006.

The law mandates a 1 percent locally sourced biodiesel blend in diesel fuel within three months from the time the law took effect, a 5 percent locally sourced bioethanol blend in gasoline and 2 percent biodiesel within two years, and a 10 percent bioethanol in four years.

According to Solmayr, the PNOC-AFC aims to establish 780,000 hectares of biofuel crop plantations throughout the country by 2012.

Solmayr, who hails from Leyte, said that in Eastern Visayas, a 150-hectare jatropha plantation was initially established in Barangay Cogon-Ipilan, Isabel, Biliran.

Early last week, PNOC-AFC started planting around 15,000 jatropha seedlings in Capiz-Iloilo, he said.

The first will cost signs a memorandum of agreement with a local cooperative for farmer members to take care of the plants, to provide alternative livelihood and sell jatropha seeds to the government, he added.

Under the project, the farmers will take care of the trees until these mature and bear fruit. The government will, in turn, buy from the cooperative all the seeds produced, bringing income to the farmers.

Solmayr said cooperative members would be given alternative livelihood for two years, or about the time when the jatropha seedlings have grown to fruit-bearing stage, to ensure the sustainability of the project.

He said the farmers would be provided separate and cash awards for intercropping and that the company would bear all the produce, to make sure they would earn while taking care of the jatropha plants.

"We started in Biliran because the farmers are enthusiastic about the jatropha project," he said.

Dr. Roberto Mary, PNOC-AFC operations manager, said the agency was planting the jatropha nana variety and expected to harvest seedlings of eight tons of jatropha seeds per hectare.

CEBU LANDSLIDE
A policeman of the provincial engineering office and a backhoe of QM Builders clear the boulders from the landslide at Brgy Bali, Barangay Ramosmagao, Balamban, Cebu. The landslide caused traffic jam early morning on Friday.
JOHN PERCIVAL LUCAS

Wildlife rescue center to be put up in Tacloban

By Vicente Labro
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE CITY government will set up a Wildlife Rescue Center this year as part of efforts to develop local ecotourism.

Mayor Alfred Romualdez will give priority to the setting up of the facility, the first of its kind in Eastern Visayas, said Jonathan Bijada, head of the city's environment and natural resources office (Cenro).

Bijada said the mayor's cousin, Rep. Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, also had plans to put up a similar center in the province.

The Wildlife Rescue Center and Mini-Zoo will rise from a 50-hectare lot which is part of the nearly 200-hectare Community-Based Forest Management Area (CBFM) in Barangay Salvacion.

The Cebu is a project of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and managed by the Danadeer Interpated Agro-Forest Development Association Inc., a people's organization, Bijada said.

He said the center would take care of wildlife confiscated from illegal trading and the abandoned and stranded animals.

The city government will sign a memorandum of agreement on the project with the DENR regional office and the people's organization, Bijada said.

A draft of the MOA has been submitted to the city legal office for technical review.

Under the agreement, the city government will provide management, management and veterinary related services to the wildlife center.

The Envi will be the lead agency of the project but will work closely with the city environment office, Bijada said.

He said the residents of Individuals had also expressed the project after this was presented to them in October last year at two several dialogues.

They will be given priority in the hiring of workers for the project, Bijada said.

He said a joint team from his office and DENR had already assessed the proposed site, which had a diversity of plants and two waterfalls that would need rehabilitation.

"We will be developing as part of our strategy the 50-hectare [rescue center area] back into its natural condition," Bijada said, adding that a tourist center is also on the site.

This year, the city has appropriated P664,000 for the proposed wildlife rescue center under the annual investment plan.

Cebu unveils first tourism ecozone

By Penelope Endoso

CEBU CITY—MACTAN ISLAND is being primed to host more tourists traffic and investments as the side of Cebu converted a part of its shores into the first tourism economic zone in the "Queen City of the South."

"We are showing to the world that here in the Philippines, here in Cebu, businessmen are bullish, that the economy are bullish about the Philippines," said Benedict Gemmell Lim Jr. Lima of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza).

An eight-hectare piece of property in Barangay Maribago in Mactan acquired the status of a special economic zone when President Macapagal-Arroyo signed Proclamation No. 1901 in November last year, after the Department of Tourism endorsed the economic zone to Peza.

The economic zone formally launched on Jan. 31 is a consensus artworked by Tourism Secretary Joe Durano, Duterte and other officials.

It will feature a P4.5-billion condominium-hotel and water park being developed by Ramon-owned Philippine-RST Corp. and expected to open in the middle of March. The five-star international hotel chain under the Imperial Palace franchise will have 317 rooms, 24 pools with a total area of 6,100 square meters, an 18-hole golf course and a 180-meter shoreline.

Mutual benefits

The "condotel" concept has been introduced to attract investors amid the global financial downturn. "In the past, it was to be a pure hotel, now it's already we from that you can do in the tourism economic zone a condotel because we know that the condo market is very right today," Durano said.

"Instead of borrowing money, they can sell per unit to individual investors and they still operate each unit in a hotel room. And they will share in the income of each room with the investors," he added.

The condotel project requires 2,000 workers during the construction phase and 1,500 direct jobs for its operations. On the other hand, the special economic zones qualifies PhilJEST Corp. for incentives and duty-free privileges.

Other projects to rise are the Shangri-La Resort, Ayala Development under Robinsons Land, Seascape under Filinvest Land at Mactan, and Shangri-La and Grand Hyatt at The Fort in Taguig City.

"When all of these tourism houses look, we will go back again to our high growth, which will compensate for the slower growth for the next two years," Durano said.

Last year, 3.14 million foreign tourists visited the Philippines, a 1.5 percent increase from the 2007 figure. South Korea was the top visitors with 611,429 (19 percent increase), followed by the Americans with 575,246 (18.4 percent).

South Korea and the United States, along with Japan, composed almost half of total tourist arrivals in the Philippines.

Arrivals from Russia grew by 34 percent; France, 16 percent; the United Kingdom, 15 percent; Australia, 8 percent; and Taiwan and Hong Kong, between 6 percent and 8 percent.

This year, the DOT set a target increase of 3.5 percent.

Market realities

"If we don't prepare on market realities, it's really disheartening. We have to be dictated by market realities," said Durano.

In 2008, Japan's total outbound travel declined by 7 percent, lowering the number of Japanese traveling abroad dropped by two million. Korea declined by 6 percent.

As of September last year, total outbound travel of the United States was down 1 percent and a further drop was expected by Department Bureau of the recession.

"A bulk of our economy went down, but because of growth in the smaller markets, we were able to outperform the market," Durano said.

The travel swoon offers its own stimulus package to attract foreign tourists, especially those from the United States and Japan, by offering big discounts, packages and direct chartered flights.

Around P100 million has been allocated for promotions in Japan, P80 million in the United States, P100 million in China, P100 million in Korea, P120 million in other Asia-Pacific countries, and P80 million in European countries.

Hanjin workers' union welcomes safety memo

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A workers' union at the shipyard of the Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction Philippines Inc. welcomed the efforts of the Korean-owned firm to enforce safety measures to prevent accidents and deaths that had already claimed 10 lives there since 2007.

Melchor Gonzales, president of the HHIC Philippines Workers Union, said the union is waiting on the part of the company's health and safety committee.

"We want to take an active role in the campaign to attain a safe working environment at the Hanjin shipyard," Gonzales said on Saturday.

The participation of HHIC-IPU, he said, will be reduced to the safety of Filipino workers. HHIC Philippines, the general contractor of the $1.3-billion shipbuilding project, has 17 Korean subcontractors that employ 15,640 workers, reports from the Department of Labor and Employment showed.

HHIC-IPU was registered with the DOLE Central Luzon office on Jan. 26. The certification has yet to be signed by DOLE regional director, Nathaniel Lacambra. The labor standards chief, Geraldine Perillo, signed it in accordance to Lacambra, a check by the inquirer showed.

Hyoung Jong Yi, HHIC Philippines general manager, said he was not aware that a workers' union exists in the company.

As Gonzales assured of the union's participation in ensuring uterus labor and safety standards, he urged HHIC Philippines "not to use Like Feb. 6, 2009 safety announcement against the exercise of the workers to self-organize."

The announcement, issued by HHIC Philippines president Jeong Sup Shim, called for a strict implementation of safety rules at the shipyard. The policy of outright termination, that comes without warning or suspension has been met with apprehension.

Gonzales said the workers wanted due process to be in place, citing feedbacks he received.

He also asked company officials to understand that the attendance of some members in the 900, 2 hours hearing on workers' death was meant to help their fellow workers and the company.

"They did not go there to fraternize the company," he said.

Gonzales made the appeal in some of those who attended the hearing were reportedly being harassed by supervisors of subcontractors.

To said HHIC Philippines "did not give any undue pressure or disciplinary action to any of its members."

He said the company has remained "a considerable number of workers (since January 2009) due to safety violations." "We will maintain the policy until a 'safety first' policy is being maintained by workers," he said. Rosette Ordas, Inquirer Central Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

■ BACOLOD CITY

PDIC paying rural bank clients

CLOSED is of the now closed Islacom Bank with deposits of P150,000 and below are finally getting paid.

The Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. on Friday started processing and paying claims of the first 30 regular savings depositors of the rural bank's branch in the city.

Benicarlo Bilang, the PDIC-assigned deputy receiver, said claims of up to 30 depositors a day would be paid or a total of 930 until Jan. 21.

The same procedure is being followed in the bank's four other branches in Dagupan City, La Carlota City and Bislig and Bugan town, all in Negros Occidental, and in Iloilo.

The bank has about 6,000 depositors in all its five branches. It is believed to be part of the Legaspi Group of banks but there were no records linking Nation Bank to Legaspi.

Carlo P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

■ TAGBILARAN CITY

Boholanos get paid, too

OVER 1,000 depositors of Pilipino Fund Bank (PFBank) branch in Tagbilaran City were processed to be paid their insured deposits on Monday (16), according to PDIC who presided by Corregidor Bridge Operations Service.

PDIC records show that that the bank had 14,782 depositors, the affiliate of the bankrupt Legaxi Group, it declared a bank holiday on Dec. 12, 2008.

Service appointed for depositors to be paid at once the PDIC had to attend to 28 other rural banks.

The claims will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis after the PDIC had completed paying out claims below P250,000, further added.

Last week, another rural bank in Bohol also declared a holiday after depositors started withdrawing their money following apprehensions on the closure of PFBank.

Rural Bank of Mila Bugas, Inc. had been operating smoothly for the past 24 years until its depositors lost confidence in its stability, according to the bank's chief Rodrigo Tan.

Ed Gapasin, Inquirer Visayas

■ DAVAO CITY

NPA rebels burn bus

COMMUNIST rebels burned a passenger bus in Lupon town in Davao Oriental early Saturday, the military said.

Maj. Randolf Cabangbang, spokesperson of Eastern Mindanao command based in Camp Panacan, said the rebels, belonging to the Hilario Penaplet Command of the Eastern Front 1 led by a certain Dante Bandalo alias Benjie, were believed responsible for the attacks.

He said the rebels were said to police who had when they flagged down the Bachelor bus in Banahawan town. They commandeered the bus to a village in Lupon before they burned it. No one was reported hurt.

Jhonnie Jay Zamora, Inquirer Mindanao

■ TACURONG CITY

Soldier faces murder raps

A SOLDIER is facing multiple murder charges after two children died when the mortar he was MS3 rifle grenade in Nimoy Aquino, Sultan Kudarat, police said.

Chief Supt. Abel Ebrada Jr., Central Mindanao police director, said Army Cpl. Danilo Nicolas of the 6th Infantry Division was reportedly cleaning his grenade launcher (M-203) when he pointed it skyward and accidentally pulled the trigger. Four children were playing in the neighborhood were killed in the explosion.

Nicolas surrendered to authorities.

Charlie C. Galvez, Inquirer Mindanao

■ LUCENA CITY

Reds kill 2 village officials

COMMUNIST rebels killed two village officials in San Narciso town in Quezon province past midnight on Sunday.

Rodolfo Godinez, 45, former chair of Barangay Binay, San Narciso, and Christopher Quinto, 36, treasurer, were on their way home on board a motorcycle when New People's Army rebels stopped them in Sitio Mandingoy and shot them.

The gunmen fled after the shooting.

Police disclosed that in 2008, the rebels operating in the area had ordered killings to leave the town, but hengerred the warning.

Zelito T. Matias Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

BORACAY SOUVENIRS
A man sells Spanish Galleon replica at P1,000- 1,500 on the white sand beach of Boracay, Aklan.

Capiz prov'l officials to probe road project

By Felipe V. Calleo
Inquirer Visayas

ROXAS CITY—THE PROVINCIAL board will investigate a P100-million road project implemented in the second district of Capiz in the wake of allegations that it was overpriced.

Wilhelm Gaisser Jaime Division, a former employee of the Department of Public Works and Highways, said the actual cost of the Central Line National Highway Project implemented in Pawey Island was less than the appropriated amount since some of the jobs listed in the program of works were not included in the actual implementation.

Divino claimed that only one contractor was getting all the projects in the district.

But he said he did not have evidence to back up his allegations.

Hector Gargales, assistant district engineer of Capiz 2nd engineering district, has denied Divino's claims.

Gargales said all the projects in the district were through biddings and that the winning bidders had implemented all their projects.

He cited the bridge projects in Cuartero town, Tumalalod in Dumarao and Calidquid in Mambusao and the asphalt overlay project in Ivisan as having undergone proper bidding before these were implemented.

While he admitted that some of the projects had defects, Gargales said their contractors would be required to correct them at their own expenses.

Patrol car hits jeep; 3 boys, mom hurt

ROXAS CITY—THREE BOYS AND the mother of one of them were seriously injured when the jeep they were riding on their way to a fiesta Scout camping event in Dao-ismo, was sideswiped by a police patrol car on Saturday in Ivisan, Capiz.

The patrol car, which belonged to the Philippine National Police (PNP) Mobile Group, was in a runaway with PNP Deputy Director Dionisio Dorio when it figured in the accident, said PO2 Francisco Ureñeta of the Ivisan police.

Ureñeta identified the young victims, all students of the Kanjamoan Village Elementary School in Lawaan, this city, were identified as Dondon Dorilaro, 12; Paul Bey Barrientos, 12; and Michael Belisario, 13.

Also injured were Belisario's mother, Myrna, and PO1 Rodolfo Borjues of the Aklan PNP, who was a passenger in the patrol car.

The victims were all brought to the Ivisan Municipal Rural Health Unit here.

The patrol car's driver, PO2 Gerard Barnes, was slightly injured and was detained at the provincial police office here.

The runaway vehicle came from Iloilo City, was on its way to the capital where Dorio was scheduled to speak on a PNP affair.

Dorio and Senior Supt. Josephus Aragon, provincial police director, were both not available for comment.

Felipe Calleo, Inquirer Visayas

Anticorruption group formed in Biliran

By Rolando O. Borrinaga
Inquirer Visayas

NAVAL, BILIRAN—AN ANTICORRUPTION group has been formed here to ensure transparency and good governance in the province.

The Biliran Advocates for Good Governance and Transparency Corruption Prevention Council (BAGGATCPC) was established after 20 representatives from almost all towns and sectors in the province attended a two-day workshop.

The First Workshop on Good Governance, Procurement and Project Monitoring held on Jan. 30-31 was organized by Fr. Bing Colombo, director of the Social Action Center of the Diocese of Naval, and held at the Diocesan Pastoral Center.

It discussed Republic Act No. 9184, or the Government Procurement Reform Act, which was passed into law in 2002, and allowable deviations from the procurement private groups to sit in government proceedings of government agencies.

Booklets

Aside from a copy each of RA 9184, the participants received two booklets, "A Guide to Park Patrol Watch" and "A Guide to Medicine Monitoring in Public Hospitals."

They joined a recall game to quiz participants on RA 9184, role-playing about government procurement and budget tracking and a rapid assessment for civic engagement.

Seminar topics also included tips on how to observe government pronouncements, the "red flags" of procurements, and the use of monitoring tools.

The founding officers include Dr. Jesus V. Ibarco as chair; Noel B. Pia as secretary, and Lorna Bergonia as treasurer.

Since the BAGGATCPC is registered, the organization will negotiate for advisory status in the procurement process of various government agencies, including the provincial government, the Department of Public Works and Highways, and the Naval Institute of Technology.

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Suspect in radioman's slay caught robbing pawnshop

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—A SUSPECT in the killing of broadcaster Arnulfo Rodrigo fell in the hands of police when he tried to rob a pawnshop in Villanueva town in Misamis Oriental on Thursday, officials said.

Ariel Degamo, alias Bong Degamo, was reportedly spotted in the Villanueva poblacion together with unidentified cohorts.

Chief Supt. Florencio Lasco, police chief of Villanueva, said Degamo tried to escape by shooting it out with policemen. He was later arrested in Sinangguy Kauswagan when lawmen cornered him.

His companion died on the spot.

"We have also filed charges of attempted robbery, attempted homicide and illegal possession of firearms against Degamo," Lasco said in a phone interview.

On Nov. 16, two motorcycle-riding men shot and killed Rodrigo, a blocktimer of the local DXI station Radyo Natin, as he was dropping off his 7-year old daughter at school in Gingoog City.

Task Force Rodrigo, created by the Department of Justice in November last year, has named Degamo and a certain Benjamin Pallaya as suspects in Rodrigo's murder.

Degamo is now detained at the provincial jail and undergoing interrogation.

The task force is also investigating the involvement of Gingoog Vice Mayor Modesto Rivera in the killing after Rodrigo's wife verbally implicated him in the case.

Rivera has denied involvement and has filed oral defamation charges against the widow. Ma. Cecilia Rodrigues, Inquirer Mindanao

ILOILO FESTIVAL
Hog on xmas in Iloilo holds a festival to commemorate the victory in the battle for the town against Muslim war raiders.
ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

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Numbers game baffles Vizcaya cops

By Melvin Gascon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

CAMP SAWMILL, BUHALAG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—Policemen found themselves in a quandary whether to arrest lot collectors who have caused the resurgence of a numbers game introduced here as Small Town Lottery (STL) but without authorization from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

Senior Supt. Pedro Dungalan, provincial police director, said he was puzzled by her collections in some towns even as he noted that the legality of the supposed STL operations by Meridien Vista Gaming Corp. was still being verified.

"We have consulted a lawyer to study the legality of the operations because the operators presented business permits issued by mayors allowing them to conduct lot collection activities," he said.

Asked whether the lot collection activities were legal and could be the subject of arrests by the police, Dungalan said: "Ask the city director as of yet because their counsel is saying that only the courts can declare whether their operations are legal."

He, however, said that Meridien's activities were not sanctioned by the PCSO, buttressing suspicions that the STL was being used as a cover for illegal "lasing" activities.

"We were furnished a copy of the certification from the PCSO indicating that it has not issued any STL franchise for Nueva Vizcaya," he said.

Business permit

Meridien began collecting bets in the towns of Bambang and Dupax del Norte on Friday after their mayors, Benjamin Cosmenas III and Antonio Pidagol, issued business permits.

Retired Senior Supt. Segundo Duran Jr., Meridien provincial coordinator, had asked the mayors to issue the business permits and the municipal councils to endorse the project.

Duran had moved as provincial police director for seven months. His retirement, however, was marred by controversy after his relief in January 2007 was blocked by Gov. Luisa Cuaresma through court action.

In his letter to the mayors, Duran said Meridien was a registered enterprise licensed to conduct gaming operations with its Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Freeport in Santa Ana, Cagayan, and authorized by the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority to set up betting stations in places outside the free port.

Niño Aldaguer, Cuca senior deputy administrator, derided Duran's claims, saying Cuca's authority to issue gambling licenses did not include the STL.

The lawyers sought lawyer Rolando Espanol Jr., Meridien's counsel, but he declined to comment pending clearance from the management.

The mechanics of Meridien's supposed STL game were similar to "lasing," according to sources who asked not be identified because they feared their safety. They said the game's operators had copied the entire "lasing" personnel that gambling lords used to employ.

Quoting Duran, some Meridien employees, who requested anonymity, said the supposed STL operations had the backing of a provincial official.

But not all mayors are convinced, and some have refused to issue permits.

Officials of the province's biggest towns, Solano, Bayombong and Bagabag—confirmed that they had not issued permits because they doubted Meridien's legitimacy.

"I will have to study the Cuca set first," said Bagabag Mayor Nestor Guillermo.

Dungalan said he would seek the opinion of the Department of the Interior and Local Government to determine the validity of the business permits issued by several mayors.

Crisis idles RP workers

From page A1

chine operator, found a job in a small aluminum factory only two months after arriving in Dubai last summer. But in January, he and six others from the 35-strong workforce were laid off.

"I am staying in Dubai trying to find another job," he said, pointing out that his previous employer has a gross deal of business when many construction projects ground to a halt, cutting demand for aluminum products.

Six years of spectacular growth in the UAE construction sector, mainly in Dubai, absorbed hundreds of thousands of Asian workers. That had a knock-on effect, creating indirect opportunities for migrants.

Financial crisis

But the financial crisis, mainly in construction and related industries, is worrying that trend, leaving foreign workers to go home.

"The crisis is worse in the Philippines. We have no future down. We are looking for part-time jobs here, anything," Arnold Vidal Agustin Pronda Nuno as he hung out with two friends who had also lost their jobs.

Christopher, a companion, said he had been in Dubai for around nine months working as a welder during the day and a bar tender in the evening.

He and his wife, who also works in a Dubai coffee shop, used to send 500 dirhams (P6,364 a month home, where their two kids were left behind.

Migrant workers send billions of dollars home every year. One survey estimates that UAE-based Filipinos sent to relatives last year was $1.1 billion, most of it to India, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Many got pink slip

Like Arnold, Christopher was working illegally in the hope that an employer would get him a work permit. Now he is searching desperately for anything.

But even for laborers who were brought to the UAE on a work visa to satisfy the needs of the once-booming economy, many are receiving the pink slip.

"Some 200 gardeners were sacked recently from our company," out of almost 20,000 workers, said an Indian as he planted saplings in the garden of an elegant office building in Dubai.

"They told us the company does not have much work and to short of money," said the man in his mid-40s, refusing to give his name.

Two other colleagues, an Indian and a Bangladeshi, carried on trimming the hedge, appearing hesitant to say anything that might jeopardize their jobs.

"We are expecting to lose our jobs," said the man, who earns a meager 500 dirhams (P636) a month in return for 48 hours a week.

He lamented that two years ago, he had to pay what was for him a fortune of around $3,000 dirhams ($3,731) to Indian jobs intermediaries to get a job in Dubai.

Unpaid vacation

Montalvan, an Indian citizen, said his employer, a large cleaning and maintenance company, last month told workers who had completed at least two years of work to get home on their two-month unpaid vacation.

"They said: do not come back until we call you," he said with a faint smile, appearing content as his has completed only 18 months of his contract.

"At the past, workers were not making vacations, even after four years of continuous work," Montalvan said, highlighting a huge work load in the construction part.

It appears some of the unpaid "vacations" are simply a way of getting rid of people without having to pay them off. Under UAE law, workers laid off must be paid 21 days' salary for each of the first five years worked and a month's salary for every year after that.

"They are trying to find excuses to bypass the rules of terminating a contract," said Monir al-Zamzo, labor attache at the Bangladesh Embassy.

"Compensation should be paid if workers are being fired," he said, adding that companies should resort to cutting overtime work and even reduce salaries before laying off workers. AFP

Risk of social unrest in Asia higher

SINGAPORE—THE GLOBAL economic crisis is heightening the potential for social unrest in Asia where millions of people suddenly out of work are exposed to demand that governments take swift and decisive action, analysts say.

Assessing whether the prospect of regimes losing months over is remote at the moment, this will depend also on how long and how deep the financial turmoil goes in a region not unfamiliar with major political upheaval, according to analysts.

"It's impossible to predict at the moment but the historical record suggests that serious and protracted economic crises may have, in some cases, serious political impact," Tim Huxley said.

The executive director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Asia cited Europe's experience during the Great Depression in the 1930s which fueled the rise of the right political movements in the run up to World War II.

"At the moment there's no reason to think that the present crisis will lead to major instability in the region or to regime change but it is simply too early to say," Huxley said.

US intelligence chief Dennis Blair last week warned that the current crisis—the worst since the Great Depression—could lead to "regime-threatening instability" in key countries.

John Harrison, a security analyst at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, considered overall the greatest long-term potential for the effectiveness of governments to ignore or to be undermined.

"If the public perceives that the governments response is unreasonable, then they may be less likely to pursue violent resistance. But the opposite could also be true," Harrison said.

Extremist groups

Extremist groups in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia could attempt to exploit social discontent expressed by the crisis to pursue their political agenda, he added.

Political analysts in Indonesia said the world's fourth-largest population would be vulnerable to social unrest ahead of and during parliamentary elections in April and presidential polls in July.

"If the country's economic fundamental weakens, social problems cannot be avoided especially when the crisis continues to force more companies to lay off their employees," said University of Indonesia's Rusmanto Hasaboni.

Kusnanto Anggoro of the Jakarta-based Center for Strategic and International Studies said some groups could exploit economic conditions to create "massive demonstrations that will threaten social unrest."

Here, prompted in part by an Asian financial crisis, led to the downfall of then President Suharto in 1998.

China's jobless

In China, where the government grapples with thousands of violent protests annually, unrest is not inevitability that could arise after millions of migrant workers who have lost their jobs in the cities return to their rural hometowns.

Beijing, always fearful of social unrest, said at least 20 million migrant workers had been left jobless so far, indicating the figure could be even higher.

The Communist Party's mouthpiece, the People's Daily, said a top national public security committee had identified jobless migrants as a key area of concern.

"The flood of unemployed migrants poses big challenges to social stability in the countryside," said professor Sun Yan, a labor, migration and population studies expert at Shanghai's Fudan University.

"If they cannot find work in rural areas, the situation in their concentrate will further deteriorate," he said.

Of particular concern are large numbers of younger migrants whose connection to rural lifestyles has been severed.

"If the second generation leave jobs in the city and can't find work in rural areas, and can't or don't want to become farmers, then they are left idle, which extremely increases social instability in rural areas," Sun said.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, analysts differed on whether the global economic crisis is a security threat.

Imtiaz Ahmed, a professor of international relations at Dhaka University and Bangladesh's chief gar-

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White House takes more informal air

From page A1

informal dress sense.

He resolves his daily intelligence and economic briefings after 6 a.m., hours later than Bush. He is also known to entertain late into the midnight oil, a sharp difference with his uncommonly early-to-bed predecessor.

Obama's "laid-back style is a sharp contrast to President Bush. He is more laid back in appearance, more 24-7 in his work ethic," said Julian Zelizer, a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University.

One of the first photographs released by the Obama White House shows the new commander in chief sitting in the Oval Office in shirtsleeves, casual attire that would have amounted to apostasy under Bush.

"Obama should be in dress code of respect," Bush's first White House chief of staff Andrew Card told Reuters Tuesday, a syndicated television newsmagazine. "I think that he would wear a suit and tie."

"We're wearing short sleeves because we have to roll up our sleeves and clean up the mess that we inherited," senior Obama adviser David Axelrod shot back in an interview with The Washington Post.

Even Bush was found to have sometimes let go of his reputedly strict suit-and-tie dress code.

Presidential casual dress does have a long tradition, with presidents ranging from John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton at times kicking back and removing their jackets for important business.

More urban setting

To reinforce Valentine's Day weekend with his family, Obama on Friday swapped for the first time since his inauguration to his Chicago home, a far more urban setting than Bush's isolated Texas ranch.

During his eight-year presidency, Bush spent all or part of almost 490 days in Crawford, Texas, and 487 days at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, according to CBS News.

Don't expect the same from Obama, who has kept up a frenetic schedule. The White House said he would make domestic trips once a week.

Reportedly chafing at White House confinement, the new president turned to support outside the capital beltway to take his message directly to "Main Street," traveling to Indiana, Florida, Virginia and Illinois this week. Next week, he is scheduled to head to Denver, Colorado, Phoenix and Arizona.

"He's a bit of a restless soul," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs has acknowledged. "He takes off a crazy day is to take a long walk . . . to solitude and tranquility."

Still canceled and leaving gaps in Indonesia and Hawaii, Obama will likely pressure Bush's tradition of flash visits abroad, spending more time speaking with foreign leaders and traveling to their cities' sites.

Accessible, open

"President Obama's new style is more responsible and open than what we have seen in the past administration . . . This is a style that will help him during a period of great economic hardship," said Darrell West, director of governance studies at the Brookings Institution.

"During crises, people want a leader who knows they are in fact and who they believe understands their pain. His style will be a tremendous plus for him in the early days of his presidency."

As Obama's first press conference last week, the atmosphere had been markedly different. He became part and parcel of Bush's interaction with the media.

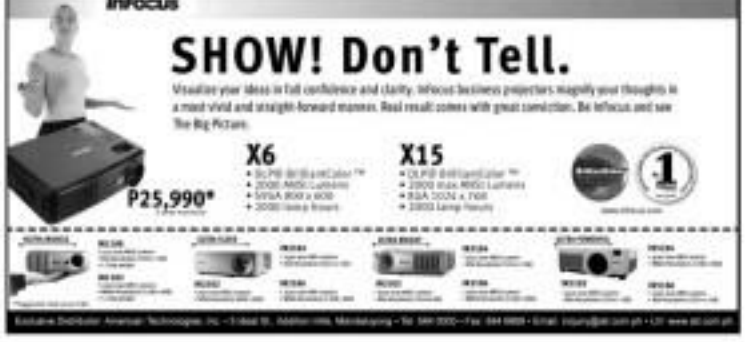
In an unruly curbs Bush would likely never have accepted, a reporter for Israel's Channel 2 television shouted: "A, Mr. President, welcome to Israel. Mr. President!" while holding up a sign that read "Israel."

Quickly settling into his new digs, Obama has already hosted regular cocktail hours and other gatherings for political friends and foes.

Should it've seen a spat in the White House parking lot, don't fret—with Obama—there are still open spaces by midmorning. Up until just a month ago, the presidential parking lot was often full before dawn.

Bush was more formal and less open. He criticized staff members who came into the Oval Office without a coat and tie. His formal personal style isolated him from ordinary folks and eventually created a big gulf between him and voters, Silver said.

He argued that if Bush once locked Colin Powell out of the Cabinet Room when the then secretary of state arrived late.



Tuna industry caught in net of US recession

From page A1

Sarangani's tuna market.

General Santos City, often referred to as the tuna capital of the Philippines, is deep in tough times.

"I used to own over 100 fishing boats," Ilagan told Agence France-Presse. "Now I operate only half that. It's just because too expensive to keep the entire fleet floating."

From a lively fish broker in the 1980s, the 51-year-old Ilagan rode on the coat-tail the tuna boom in the past two decades to become one of the top local fleet owners using traditional lines to catch the giant fish.

He now owns luxury cars and homes, and attends boxing matches in Las Vegas with his political friends.

Reversal of fortune

But his fortune, along with the livelihoods of tens of thousands who rely on the tuna industry, has been dented by the economic recession in the United States.

Yellowfin tuna is found in deep parts of the Pacific Ocean, as well as in the Moro Gulf and Celebes Sea straddling the border of the Philippines and Indonesia.

The fish that ain't atop the oceanic food chain is considered gold in General Santos City where the industry accounts for 60 percent of the local economy and practically all support of life for the half a million residents are impacted by the fish.

The city is home to several of the country's major tuna canning factories, with an average daily capacity of about 750 tons for both the local and export markets.

"If there is no tuna, there will be no food, no jobs, no money to send our children to school," said Tony Reviseo, who supervises port operations for Philippine Global Industrial Corp., which exports tuna to fish brokers in Los Angeles.

Crisis meeting

Mayor Pedro Acharon said the local government had held crisis meetings with the major tuna fishing associations and canneries in an effort to avert economic disaster.

"Production lines were affected when the demand slowed down. The factories cannot produce and produce without any orders. There were some downsizing of workers, and reduction of manpower shifts," Acharon said.

The industry worth $150 million a year, directly employs between 60,000 and 80,000 people in General Santos City alone. Nationwide, it employs about a million people and contributes around 4 percent to the annual GDP (gross domestic product).

Ilagan said the family business—which has had to overcome new key small although he won't say how many—lost about P22 million (nearly half a million dollars) in the last quarter of 2008.

Ilagan is hoping that when things pick up, former employees can return. In the meantime, he's falling back on his family to help run the company.

Alternative markets

Mariano Fernandez, president of the local tuna canners' association, said the industry could survive the slowdown by exploring alternative markets in Europe and the Middle East.

At the factory of Ocean Canning Corp. in the outskirts of the city, where he is general manager, Fernandez said the US market remained "the main thrust."

"We still get orders but not as much as before," he said.

After the shock of dashed US orders last December, the company began selling 70 percent of its products to Europe and is now seeking to expand exports to China and the Middle East.

"We cannot back strong as the story of Arroyano's '90s still have a good future to come. After all, people need to eat to survive," he said. AFP

WORKERS pack tuna at a factory in General Santos City, dubbed the country's Tuna Capital.

Families grow own veggies, skip meals

From page A1

Pequeña, arranges laundry and other menial jobs from time to time in exchange for food and monetary compensation.

Her husband is a pedicab driver who earns about P100 a day.

Every day, Mercedes buys the cheapest rice—often the kind being sold by the National Food Authority.

"We skip rice at breakfast or the lifestyle rice would sustain us till dinner. For breakfast, we subsist on cheap bread and repacked coffee that both cost P2 each," she says.

'Gabi, kangkong' leaves

Her stand, she collects vegetables in the backyard, including gabi (yam) and kangkong (swamp cabbage) leaves, which she gets for free.

Others she has taken money she buys coconut milk or her family's stand would have at least a "flavor."

"If I have no extra money, I just cook the vegetables with oil and water," she added.

Soobe does not have to spend additional money for firewood or charcoal, she looks for abandoned shacks and gets its wooden parts destroyed still outside for firewood.

Nimia Signo, 40, a single mother of five, has no permanent work and would borrow money from her parents whenever she needs extra rice for her family.

Baraduo

Her earnings binds her P100 to P200 and she would find a way to make P100 enough for the day's needs.

"The way it is buy P10 worth of stand and fresh bananas, the seller-in-waiting from a neighborhood store. I would then share the stand with the bananas as reminders, with my two children," Nimia says.

A month ago, Nimia was vending in front of her shack in Barangay Concepcion Arquella, but this was once had to close for lack of capital.

She thought of continuing her eldest child, a fourth year high school student, to quit school, but she later insisted that he go on with his studies as it was only a few years more before graduation.

Survey

Results of a survey by the Ateneo de Naga University Social Science Research Center (ASSRC) released in the last quarter of 2008 echoed the plight of families like Nieves and Mercedes.

The survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews with 400 randomly selected adults representing 28,000 households in the city from July to September last year.

Ramon Nelson III, chair of the university's Social Sciences Department, says families have had not become cheap are good as we are rational but because they are cheaper.

Search for work abroad

"Many persons in Naga City cope with the hard times by looking for work abroad," ASSRC head Pedro Cuapan says, referring to unsuccessful finding of the survey.

More than 10 percent of respondent families mention computerized of clubs and reducing the number of meals in a day as ways to cope with the hard times.

As least 13 percent mention selling household assets, moving to cheaper housing units, and stopping family members from going to schools as options.

Quitting school

A few others have decided to work for longer hours, save on leisure expenses, grow vegetables in the backyard, or rely on charity.

"I have to somehow at least P100 a day for the allowances of my two grandchildren whom I am sending to school," says Angelina Francisco, 64, who lives in a small one-room room in front of her house in Sitio Sapatan in Barangay Bagumbayan Sur.

"Despite the difficulty, I never want my grandchildren to quit schooling. What would happen to them if they could not finish their studies?" she says.

Jennifer Lopez, Maria Quintillan, 41, who sells fried street peanuts in the same barangay, says her son, who is in Grade 6, might not enroll in high school next school year "if life becomes harder for us."

Fifty-eight percent of the families in the city consider themselves poor, while 24 percent say they are not but poor nor well-off.

The new self-rated poverty rate is 3.7 percentage points higher than the 52.8 percent point during a similar survey in the first quarter of 2008.

The self-rated monthly minimum income was placed at P10,000.

The survey has also found that the proportion of families experiencing hunger in the city increased from 21 percent in March to 32 percent in July.

RESULTS OF FEBRUARY 13 DRAW

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Ping: Let's not be strict on rules of evidence

FINANCE Secretary Margarita Teves and Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez attend the Senate hearing on the alleged collusion of Filipino and foreign contractors and personalities in a World Bank-funded projects. EFE-LACSON

By Paolo G. Montecillo
Reporter

At the hearing on Thursday, Santiago said "so far, there is no evidence against" First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

She and other senators assailed the World Bank for not furnishing the Senate a copy of the report it had given the Department of Finance and Office of the Ombudsman as early as 2007.

They also derailed in unanimity World Bank country representative Bert Hofman's no-smoking-gun proof of purported bid rigging in the road projects.

Lacson earlier questioned the Senate hearing, saying the prolonged discussions on the health of the President's husband, who is being implicated in the controversy, and coleader of events, such as three government entities airing live the Senate proceedings, seemed to show the whole thing was "orchestrated" by the administration.

Letter from Hofman

Santiago yesterday defended the way she conducted the hearing, disclosing that she received a letter from Hofman on Friday.

"He said on the referral report he sent to the Finance secretary and the Ombudsman, we are saying that we are certain that a crime had been committed ... [We investigated and it's up to them to say whether a crime indeed had been committed," she said on dzBB radio.

Santiago said the World Bank was making does it had no evidence on people like Mike Arroyo.

She based disturbing the World Bank's "highly confidential" report on the alleged collusion among contractors and personalities being circulated on the Internet.

"So who put this on the Internet ... from rumors?" she asked.

Asked what she thought would be the motive for posting the World Bank report on the Internet, Santiago said: "In so to ensure disorder among Filipinos whether one is pro-Gloria or anti-Gloria."

She said the Americans could be doing some things that "they don't want us to give attention to," like the issue of jurisdiction over the case of convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

She said the letter from Hofman made it important for the National Bureau of Investigation to step in. But she noted the difficulty of getting hold of witnesses, a number of whom have left the country.

Executive session

Santiago said the Senate would hold an executive session this week and decide whether the different "highly confidential" World Bank reports on the issue would be made public.

The senator said she wanted the bank reports to be made public.

She also said she would not understand why Lacson was irked when he was the one who left the

LACSON

hearing on Thursday early.

Lacson had to leave the hearing before noon as he was the guest speaker of a Rotary Club luncheon.

Santiago said Lacson told her and Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile that he had to leave because he had to deliver a speech but did not say he was returning to ask questions at the hearing.

She said that at the outset she told senators she would end the hearing after three hours. The hearing started 9:30 a.m. and ended at 12:30 p.m.

On the criticism that it took an hour to discuss Mike Arroyo's health, Santiago noted that Sen. Rodolfo Biazon got irked because she chided him for spending a lot of time questioning the health problems of the First Gentleman.

She said it would be better for Lacson to just take up the matter with other senators in private than saying his criticisms to the media.

She also suggested that Lacson deliver a privilege speech so he could defend with fact and other senators be criticized.

Santiago said Lacson was "using bad" when he suggested that other committees take up the issue. "That's forum shopping," she said.

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Senators have exaggerated sense of jurisdiction

By Paolo G. Montecillo
Reporter

anti-widespread sanctions.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, chair of the Senate economic affairs committee, stressed that Hofman should attend the next hearing or he would be cited in contempt.

Hofman had refused to obey earlier summons, insisting Santiago first flag waiving hysterical fits.

"We can't drag each other before the Supreme Court or even the International Court of Justice. This is good because we can now cut the noise in the Philippines, the World Bank or us," Santiago said.

That is not the issue. The issue relevant issue is what the limits of Senate powers are as it asserts its constitutionally mandated function to conduct inquiries "in aid of legislation."

It is a function that has often caused new lawmaking by abusive senators. Santiago included, of senators summoned under threat of contempt of the Senate.

Another important issue: Can the Philippines cope with economic retaliation from the United States?

Another question: Suppose Hofman disobeys the Senate subpoena, can its sergeant at arms arrest Hofman and detain him in the Senate? Will he submit to arrest? Suppose he refuses to be arrested, can he be deported and declared persona non grata, and for what? For disobeying a Senate subpoena?

Police powers

How far does the police powers of the Senate go (assuming it has such powers?). The senators have an exaggerated sense of their jurisdiction and powers.

Hofman's refusal to appear at the committee hearings is affirmed the senators and Francisco Duque III, before subpoenaing him on Hofman the way they did to the presidents of the European and American chambers of commerce when the Senate was conducting a fact-finding on the economic meltdown occasioned by Enrile at Pan Pacific in Guiguinto.

The senators are now ganging up on Hofman for a history of bid rigging starting as a consequence of its reports on alleged corrupt practices related to road projects the bank is funding.

The Senate hearings set the stage for humiliating the multilateral agency over the issue of whether the chamber can compel the World Bank country director to testify and be humiliated by subjective senators, and whether he is covered by diplomatic immunity from mandatory appearance.

Core issue

Diplomatic immunity is the core issue of this controversy.

The Senate inquiry has diverted the spotlight from the contents of the World Bank reports on the controversial National Road Improvement and Management Program.

The contents are now the subject of administrative investigations by the Office of the Ombudsman, taking off from copies of the reports which were supplied by the World Bank to the Department of Finance and the Office of the Ombudsman as grounds for their follow-up investigations to determine criminal liability of parties named in the reports.

The World Bank did not supply the Senate committee copies of the documents.

In February 2008, the World Bank approved a $150-million national roads improvement project for the Philippines. In 2003, the bank identified signs of procurement problems.

Collusion

Between 2003 and 2006, the multilateral agency rejected two large contracts in three rounds of bidding after it discovered "strong signs of collusion and excessive pricing" among several construction companies.

The agency's integrity vice president conducted an investigation. As a result, the World Bank refused to award the contracts worth $23 million.

In January 2009, the agency blacklisted seven firms, including three Filipino contractors, for engaging in "collusive practices under the bank-financed" projects in the Philippines.

On Jan 27, 2009, the Senate started conducting a hearing on the alleged bid rigging of the road projects. Public sanction is observed by World Bank experts as a significant deterrent to fraud and corruption.

Over the past decade, the World Bank has recognized corruption as one of the biggest obstacles to economic and social development. The agency has applied sanctions to firms in many countries. It has determined to have engaged in wrongdoing.

The World Bank has also blacklisted Siemens AG and its subsidiaries for violating its anti-corruption guidelines in connection with projects it funded in Venezuela.

Misc Arroyo

At the Senate hearing on Jan. 27, Sen. Panfilo Lacson said First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo met on several occasions with Eduardo de Leon, owner of one of the blacklisted contracting firms.

On Feb. 3, Strohbehn reported that witnesses interviewed by the World Bank in its investigation linked Mike Arroyo to bid rigging.

Santiago said the next day that her copy of the World Bank report did not contain details that implicated President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband.

The issue that sparked the dispute over the diplomatic immunity of Hofman arose from the Senate letter protesting and requesting reconsideration of the country director's refusal to give a copy of the World Bank documents on the collusion scandal that implicates Mike Arroyo.

International law

In a Feb. 9 letter to Santiago in reply to her Feb. 6 letter, Hofman wrote: "Your letter raises important considerations of national and international law with respect to availability of information in the custody of the World Bank (core) debarment of international and domestic firms on grounds of collusion."

Hofman said he forwarded Santiago's letter to the legal department of the World Bank headquarters in Washington, apparently to study the points of international law raised by Santiago.

Hofman promised he would provide the Senate with a copy of one of the World Bank's reports—the Oracle audit report that is now being finalized by its integrity vice president.

The issue, which has reached an impasse, is highly sensitive since it involves issues of sovereignty and international relations between the Philippines and the World Bank whose goodwill is extremely important to financial assistance to Philippine economic development programs.

Demagoguery

A flare up provoked by false sense of nationalism, fanned by demagoguery in Senate investigations, could bring heavy economic costs.

Husbands in the Senate playing the nationalist card before make sure they are not abusing their own and the country's best by hauling foreigners and institutions for the country's economic woes, including corruption. (Continued on Wednesday) The diplomatic immunity dilemma

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Aplus METRO
Editor Ricardo S. Ulanday

DID YOU KNOW

[illegible] were convicted in Cavite on charges that they were involved in the Cavite Mutiny of 1872. The three priests, collectively known as Gomburza, were executed on Feb. 17, 1872.

Cyril Almendrala, Inquirer Research

Woman, 2 sons killed in blaze in QC

Victims' 11 relatives injured; cause of fire still under probe

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A WOMAN AND HER TWO SONS WERE KILLED WHILE 11 OF their relatives were hurt when a fire broke out in a compound located in a densely populated area in Commonwealth, Quezon City, yesterday morning.

Supt. Romeo Nello, head of the Quezon City Fire station 3, said the bodies of Rose Caballero, 48, and her sons Shawel, 23, and Carlo, 21, were found inside the toilet of their house on Don Domingo Extension, Barangay Holy Spirit.

Rose and Carlo were already out of the house when they realized that Shawel, a special child, was still inside. They rushed back in to get him but died in the attempt, he added.

The fire raged on to razed the Caballeros' house before spreading to three other houses inside the compound, injuring 11 of the victims' relatives.

Dorcas Caballero, 49, an overseas Filipino worker who had just arrived from Dubai yesterday, narrated the worst tragedy in her life.

"We were told to just spend the night there and we scheduled to go home to the province today," Bella said.

He added that Dorcas suffered third degree burns and was taken to the Quirino Memorial Medical Center for treatment.

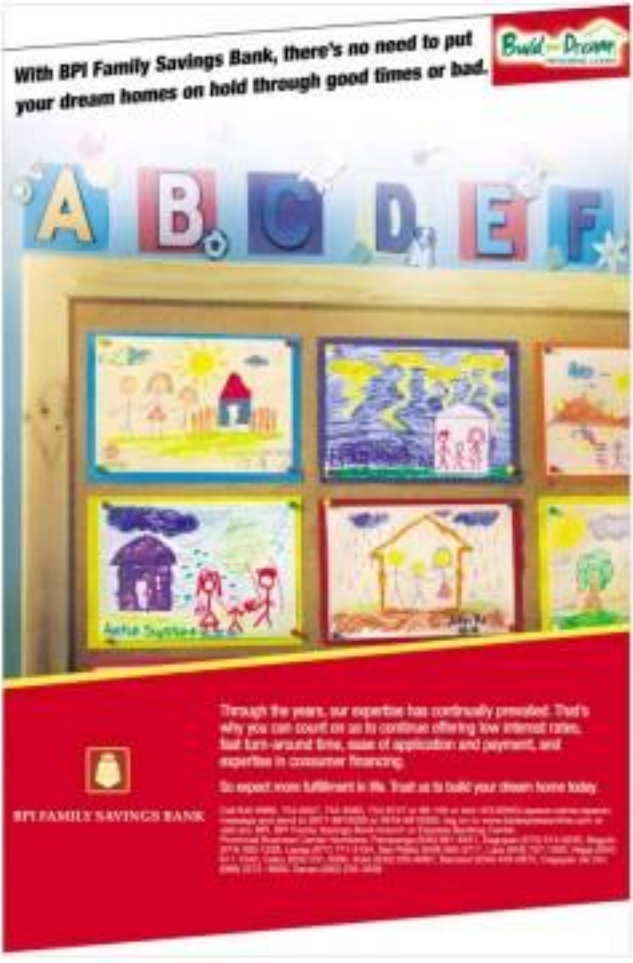
"We had the worst harm compared to the other members," the fire chief said.

Two young children—Rico Mae, 2, and her brother, Jom Caballero, 5—suffered first degree burns.

Also hurt were Jing, 40; Regine, 12; Cindy, 11; Jane, Aubry, Rigen and Jordan, all surnamed Caballero, and another who has yet to be identified.

Bella said all the injured, except for Dorcas, were brought to the Philippine General Hospital. They were immediately released after treatment.

•••



MMDA: We removed 20 trees but we have planted thousands

By Alison W Lopez

ALTHOUGH THEY REMOVED for hulling more than 20 trees on Kalayaan Avenue, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday stressed that it has planted thousands of more all over Eldest Manila as part of its eco-friendly roadway projects.

The MMDA—which has taken a lot of flak from environmentalists for clearing the avenue of trees to perpetuation for a road widening project—said they began planting trees more than two years ago on the sidewalks of major thoroughfares such as Edsa, Commonwealth Avenue and Marcos Highway.

MMDA General Manager Robert Barbers said they intend to plant 50,000 more trees of the swaying by (Para bevarying) century.

He explained that they chose this particular tree because it does not grow too big and its branches are easier to trim.

Barbers also said the Kalayaan road widening project was necessary to ease up traffic on the avenue which is being used by students of Ateneo de Manila University, Miriam College and the University of the Philippines.

"It's [also] the road connected to the North and South Expressways, Blessing Traffic Chief is moving well. Imagine the traffic because they have already removed all of the trees which stand in the way of the road widening project.

On Friday, the DENR ordered the MMDA to stop removing the trees on the avenue, saying it has not issued a tree-cutting permit to the agency.

The MMDA critics, including Malacañang, will be doing the agency a favor if they were to go after establishments which were against the planting of trees.

"There are even companies that use as because the trees are planted on the sidewalk and not their parking space. But the cases they are talking about is caused by the government," he said.

"We removed over 20 trees but we planted over thousands. We hope they will look at the bigger picture," Barbers added.

HEAVY TRAFFIC ON GILMORE RAMON F.

Francis Samaniego, 43, of Quezon City writes: "Traffic is heavy every day at the corner of Gilmore and Aurora Boulevard due to carnivores who double park their cars in front of computer shops in the area. The carnivals [roadsiders] put secondary lanes to be parking due cars while the MMDA apprehends them who beat the red light."

METROBRIEFS

Man stabbed dead

A TRICYCLE driver was killing for his son ended up dead after he was stabbed by eight men outside his house before dawn yesterday in Manila. Rodrigo Maturino, 37, of Bambang Street in Tondo, was declared dead on arrival at the nearby Mole-spoliter Hospital from multiple stab wounds all over his body. Eyewitnesses from the Manila Police District said they have started looking for the eight suspects who escaped after they attacked the victim. They were identified as Henry Rangaman, Sandy Bautista (Nagsing, Jeffrey, Carlo, Jayson, Rong and Boric. Reports from the MPD homicide section revealed that the incident happened at around 2:45 a.m. yesterday on Bambang Street in Tondo. SPO2 Oscar Tacorin, case investigator, said the eight men were engaged in a brawl over with members of a rival group when Maturino came out of his house looking for his teenage son, whom he thought was involved in the fight. Tacorin added that the eight men could have mistaken Maturino for a member of the rival group, prompting them to attack him.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Fun ride turns fatal

THE MANILA City police yesterday said it was still too early to say what caused a man to fall to his death in an amusement park on Valentine's Day. Chief Insp. Reynaldo Rosales, investigator-on-duty, said Gerardo Pella, 37, of E. 6 Hortensia Street, Pasay, was all alone when he took a ride at the Wonder of Star City at 5 p.m. the fall while the ride was rolling. Rosales said he was taken to a hospital where he was declared dead on arrival. Rosales said the City Fun Wonder Wheel's amusement it is closed by the city engineering office which would conduct investigation. But it appears now that the City said that the ride will be closed. But the ride was safe. "We had nevertheless been the case by concessionaire stands saying that the ride was getting out of its fairness as the counter was 20-25 meters from the surrounding area," lawyer Reggie Jubahal said in a phone interview.

Alison W Lopez

FURRY COMPANION
A dog keeps a girl company as she waits for her family to get out of the water in Bayanihan, Roxas Boulevard. LEO ECHAL

Errant cops in Alabang

ACTORS policemen are still at out the intersection of Corporate Avenue and Alabang Zapote Road in Filinvest. Traffic light lasts go even for only five seconds, not giving motorists enough time to cross the intersection. So many motorists are waiting at this other side to pass on red lights.

ANJO ATIENZA, 46, Alabang, Muntinlupa City

Stinky street

THERE is waste running out on the side street between Cubao Expo and the Professional Towers on Aliaga, leaving a very stinky odor in the air.

ARIEL PENALOSA, 37, San Juan City

Illegal jeep terminal in Sampaloc

ABOUT any ripe morning this on Kanlaong Quezon Avenue at Fernberg pinagsasang bahimal ang kanilang illegal kaniyo sa gitna. Why have the jeepneys turned the intersection of Quezon Avenue and Fernberg into a terminal? We can't move forward even if the traffic light has turned green.

JOSEF SANTOS, 32, Sampaloc

Another complaint about reckless bus

ON FEB. 4 at around 10 a.m., I was behind Gateway Bus no. 1407 III which was traveling on East Avenue up to Commonwealth Avenue. It changed lanes abruptly several times without signaling. It almost hit my car but I was able to get out of the way. Why do it need this reckless behavior for? The driver obviously had no concern for the safety of other people. He just wanted to get passengers from these loading areas.

ARIEL J.R. de Tandag Sora, Quezon City

Scary avenue

I AGREE with Albert of Fairview (Citizens' Call, Feb. 2). Motorcycles or bikes on IBP is scary on Commonwealth during the rush hours as driven by reckless drivers.

ENRICH, 27, Fairview

Busted water pipe

THERE is a busted water pipe on Roosevelt Avenue in front of Gloucester near barangay hall of Barangay San Antonio, District I. It needs immediate action.

TESSY VILLANUEVA, 44, Quezon City

Leaking pipe in Manresa

THERE is a leak on Bonsuan corner 5th. Flora Streets in Manresa, Quezon City. I hope Maynilad can mark it.

JOEL, 47, Manresa, Quezon City

Family loses ₱200,000 to thieves

By Jessamine I. Andrade

SIX MEN ARMED WITH GUNS and knives broke into a house in Manila and tied up a 67-year-old woman and her four children before stealing some ₱200,000 worth of cash and valuables yesterday morning.

In a complaint, Silvestra Sto. Rio, a resident of 1918 Pilar Hidalgo-Lim corner Remedios Streets in Ermita, said that at 6:15 a.m. yesterday, their housemaid, Jocelyn Garcia, was about to enter the house when the robbers accosted her and at gunpoint, let themselves in.

SPO1 Ghazali Salikjo of the Manila Police District's Ermita police station 5 said the armed men rousted Rodio and her children from sleep, herded them into a room and tied them up before ransacking the house.

Pallayo added that the family managed to untie themselves after the robbers left and reported the incident to the police.

Judge sends man to jail over lighter, aluminum foil

By DJ Yap

A DISPOSABLE LIGHTER AND a strip of aluminum foil were all it took to send a Pasig City resident to jail where he may remain for up to two years.

Rogelio M. Andico was found guilty of possessing drug paraphernalia and sentenced to zero between six months and two years in prison.

He was also ordered to pay a fine of ₱10,000 for his crime in a decision promulgated last month by Judge Librada S. Gerona of the Pasig Regional Trial Court Branch 164.

In his five-page decision dated Jan. 30, Gerona said he found sufficient evidence to convict Andico who was arrested on Aug. 22, 2007, by a Pasig police team who were looking for a fugitive and a recipient of text scam.

Records further showed that the alleged drug paraphernalia in Andico's control separate by the anti-narcotics unit were lighters and aluminum foil, locally known as "shabu."

"Although the objects as drug paraphernalia confiscated from the accused turned out to be negative for dangerous drugs, these objects were [] or intended for smoking, processing, administering, ingesting, ingesting or introducing any dangerous drug into the body," the court said.

In his defense, Andico declared that the paraphernalia were his and accused his arresting officers of framing him when he failed to give them the ₱5,000 they were allegedly trying to extort from him.

He said the policemen were looking for an extortion payment and got angry when he told them he did not know the person.

But Gerona said Andico's defense was weak.

"A mere denial, like alibi, is inherently a weak defense and constitutes self-serving negative evidence which cannot be accorded greater evidentiary weight than the declarations of a credible witness who testifies on affirmative matters," he said.

Woman, 2 sons killed in blaze

By [illegible]

He added that they have yet to determine the cause of the fire which started in the kitchen of Eary's house at 8:57 a.m. yesterday.

Police initial investigation, however, revealed that there was an electrical overload and illegal power connection.

"We found out during the probe operation that the victims had plenty of electrical appliances," Bella said, adding that their investigators also discovered several "octopus connections" leading to other houses inside the compound.

But at the same time, he explained that they were also looking into the statements of some residents who said they heard an explosion in the victims' house before the fire broke out.

The blaze, Bella said, was placed under control at around 6:40 a.m. after it reached the third alarm.

TWO BOYS seen in the foreground by what remains of a house after it was hit by a fire in Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City. Three persons were killed while 11 were hurt in the incident. ALEX GOSE

The estimate of the damage has yet to be determined because investigators have not talked to any of the survivors.

The incident, however, prompted Bella to issue a warning. "I would like to reiterate that everyone should immediately get out of a burning house regardless if the fire has just started because it can easily spread and its heats will suffocate people inside."

He also advised that people should not go back inside a burning house because "chances are you will not be able to survive."

'Feedback' triggers could amplify climate peril

PARIS— NEW STUDIES HAVE warned of triggers in the natural environment, including a gigantic release from methane in Siberia and Canada, that could viciously amplify global warming.

Throwing cabalistic hooks, coral reefs and forests are becoming less able to suck carbon dioxide (CO2) out of the atmosphere, according to papers presented this weekend.

Together, these phenomena mean that more heat-trapping gases will enter the atmosphere, added to rises caused by human activities, paving the way for runaway global warming, thawing the permafrost layers of climate change in ever higher gear.

Researchers in Finland and Russia discovered that arteries stable is leaking into the air from so-called "open cycle" ecosystems found throughout the tundra, a vast expanse of treeless ice in higher latitudes.

CO2 is the principal fuel for the fast's share of the gases that have driven global temperatures inexorably higher over the last century.

Without doubt, it FALL is the first plentiful in volume, but 300 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO2. It accounts for about 40 percent of total global warming, mainly due to a diet toward dramatic intensive agriculture.

In unprecedented news The Russian city of Salekhard, Dmitri Mackinnon of the University of Bangor in Finland and colleagues found that N2O leaked as a result of cryostabilities, a process that occurs when frozen soil is thawed and then refrozen.

"There is evidence that warming of the Arctic will accelerate cryostabilities, which would lead to an increased abundance of great circles in the future," said Chris Jones, published on Sunday by the journal Nature Geoscience.

The world receives N2O emissions from Jumbo, and therefore a positive feedback to climate change."

Research presented on Saturday at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Chicago suggested that the frozen soil of the tundra stored far more greenhouse gas than previously thought.

"Without question it is poised to be a strong hint on the accelerator pedal of atmospheric CO2," said Chris Field, a professor at Stanford and a top scientist on the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC).

"The core molecule of the total amount of carbon that's frozen is permafrost soils in on the order of 1,000 billion tons (billion) tons," he said.

By comparison, the amount of CO2 that has been released through the burning of fossil fuels since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution is around 350 billion tons.

The greenhouse gases in the tundra, which also includes methane, come from the decayed remains of vegetation that died long ago.

Meanwhile, new research on the Southern Ocean most-studied Antarctica support that the seas, a vital "carbon sink," is sucking up less CO2 than before.

Nicolas Metzl, researcher in the French National Research Institute, said force winds—aggravated by climate change and gaps in the ozone layer—were churning the sea, which brought CO2 to the surface and released it into the air.

The adds to previous research that points to the ocean's decaying effectiveness as a carbon sponge, he said.

"Under, human activity injects about 10 billion tons of CO2 per year into the atmosphere, compared to around ten billion in the early 1990s," said Metzl.

"Before we had no ocean that captured some two billion tons—about a third. Today we say below two billion tons," less than a fifth of the total, he added.

AFP

MUSLIM FLAGELLANTS

Pilgrims perform the ritual of self-flagellation during the Ashura religious event in Karbala, Iraq, on Feb. 14. Ashura marks the end of a 40-day mourning period following Arbaeen, the religious ritual that commemorates the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Imam Hussein in 680 AD. AFP/EPA

'Major advance' in fighting AIDS seen in revolutionary gene therapy

PARIS— THE WORLD'S LARGEST experiment using gene therapy to combat the AIDS virus has yielded "a major advance," doctors said on Sunday, hailing it as both beneficial and safe—attention said on Sunday.

Tests from an advanced phase of the new process confirm that the quest to use transplanted genes to rout back the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is valid, they said.

Doctors led by Ronald Mcmyriam of the University of California in Los Angeles recruited 74 HIV-infected volunteers for the experiment, whose results are reported online by the journal Nature Medicine.

Half the group were given blood cells—white blood cells—that had been infiltered by a crippled virus containing a key gene, while the other were given a harmless look-alike substance.

The gene encodes something called an SB4 enzyme, or interferon for short—a small molecule that, like a spammer, throws into a machine, it is needed to block HIV from replicating once it infects a cell.

Immune cells are progenitor cells, which means that when they replicate, future generations of them still will carry the same genetic code.

The goal was to see whether these novel materials, by being shielded from HIV thanks to the interferon, would survive the body's immune defenses and whether HIV drained a haven for reproduction, would retreat.

Forty-eight weeks after the so-called ITI experiment began, there was no statistical difference between those who had received the gene and those who were given the placebo.

But in the 100-week mark, there was encouraging news in the gene group, the viral count was significantly lower. And the count of CD4 cells—immune cells that are depleted by HIV—was higher.

AFP

PSBank TGIF Challenge: 5 day Home loan credit decision or free interest on your 1st year!

PSBank's announcement its "Fourth Guarantees, It's Five Days" (TGIF) promo to offer even higher rewards! TGIF is PSBank's current event to quickly process housing loan applications within 5 days.

From February 16 to June 15, 2008, an applicant who fails to get any credit decision via mobile phone SMS/text within 5 working days after loan application will enjoy interest-free first year payments.

If the approved loan is for P2 million, at 9.5% interest per annum, the borrower enjoys instant savings of P190,000. The TGIF promo, excludes loans worth P10M and above.

To avail of the TGIF promo, applicants may visit any of PSBank's 168 branches nationwide and submit the requirements. The applicant should provide his mobile phone number when the application for an online updates will be done via SMS.

The TGIF challenge decoded loans of P10 million and above. Applications are also accepted at PSBank Remote Banking. For more information, please call 811-3000.

US military offers path to citizenship

NEW YORK— THE US MILITARY WILL BE giving enrolling skilled immigrants who are living in this country with temporary visas, offering them the chance to become US citizens in as little as six months.

Immigrants who are permanent residents have long been eligible to enlist. But the new effort, for the first time since the Vietnam War, will open the armed forces to temporary immigrants if they have lived in the United States for a minimum of two years, according to military officials familiar with the plan.

Recruiters expect that the temporary immigrants will include foreign students, foreign language skills and professional expertise from many countries who enter, helping the military in IR shortages in medical care, language interpretation and field intelligence analysis.

"The American Army Rule itself is a lot of different countries where cultural assistance is critical," said Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, the top military personnel officer for the Army, which is leading the pilot program. "There will be some very talented folks in this group."

The program will begin small—limited to 1,000 enlistees nationwide in its first year, most for the Army and none for other branches. If the pilot program succeeds as Pentagon officials anticipate, it will expand to 5,000 members of this military. For the Army, it could eventually provide as many as 14,000 volunteers a year, or about one in six recruits.

About 8,000 permanent immigrants with green cards join the armed forces annually, the Pentagon reports, and about 29,000 foreign-born people currently serving are not US citizens.

Although the Pentagon has had sweeping authority to recruit immigrants since shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks, military officials have moved cautiously to use the legal groundwork for the temporary immigrant program to avoid controversy within the ranks and among veterans over the prospect of large numbers of immigrants in the armed forces.

The military does not allow illegal immigrants to enlist, and short policy would not change, officials said.

Military officials want to attract immigrants who have native knowledge of language and cultures that the Pentagon considers strategically vital. The program will also be open to students and refugees.

The Army's one-year pilot program will begin in New York City, to recruit about 500 temporary immigrants who speak one or more of 35 languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Igbo (a tongue spoken in Nigeria), Kurdish, Nepalese, Pashto, Russian and Tamil. Spanish speakers are not eligible. The Army's program will also include about 200 medical professionals to be recruited statewide, including will start after September of Hundred Twenty-Officials spoke on condition of anonymity in coming days.

NYT

FCBAI BAKERY FAIR 2009
WHERE THE BEST IN BAKING CONVERGE

By raising the bar for product quality, fostering ethics and dignity of the baking profession, FCBAI has brought about a new level of excellence never before seen in the industry.

When started in 1964 as an alliance of bakers owners forged to address certain business threatening issues such as high price and scarcity of flour and local government issues such as unregulated sanitary practices, etc.; the association, Filipino Chinese Bakery Association, Inc. (FCBAI) has since grown into a well-organized organization that has been instrumental in the establishment of standards in the baking industry. The organization's major thrusts is in Micro, Macro and the premium, FCBAI has organized these members for a wide array of technical assistance, training programs — with the introduction of modern baking methods and technologies including sanitary practices. FCBAI has also been a working closely with the government agencies as well as the US Wheat Associates, American Institute of Baking, Lyceum Baking School, California Raisin Board, etc., and all other components of the trade to conduct seminars, workshops and other activities to improve the baking industry.

To fulfill the FCBAI Board brought a piece of land on Food Avenue, the Corp. Manila Domestic Expansion and Hotwire Bakery, which is dedicated to building the organization as an effective and thriving business entity. The organization has been working with the members and the non-members to hold to its efficacy. FCBAI spearheaded a new goal to make corporation that they envisioned to be a formal affair. Called "FCBAI Bakery Fair," the trade expo — which added has since been held every two years — is participated by bakers and other interests engaged in the bakery trade like suppliers and equipment, manufacturers of baking equipment and packaging materials, wholesale bakeries, franchisees, etc. who take this exciting opportunity to exhibit their products for bakery owners and interested entrepreneurs intending to go into the bakery business. Such a hotel undertaking has validated even more FCBAI's commitment to uplift the local baking industry as much as this teaching one to their entrepreneurs and students and helping their become better bakers to become a contributing partner to the group.

Sometimes, FCBAI found to facilitate undergrads and non-small live their learning and working requirements — some plan had to be found. Dr. made. Like all hopes, starting a same-sized business is like having your cake and eating it, too. Thus, in such FCBAI inaugurated its new Technical Baking Center. It is the association's commitment on the group's efforts in growing with the technological advancements in baking. Complete with up-to-date baking equipment and state-of-the-art modern baking equipment, it is the intent of the new step of improving knowledge and greater understanding and appreciation of baking principles.

To date, the FCBAI Baking Center has been Accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) under the Office of the President as one of the Assessment Venue Centers in the National Capital Region (NCR) for baking competency certification for the various bakery and food-related assessments. Here, basic and advanced baking courses are offered to students who intend to enter the trade and those who want to work abroad. Likewise, a "Direct Employer Center" will be put up to help all the bakery owners in training and baking procedures.

In the meantime, the FCBAI Bakery Fair 2009 is coming up on February 19-21 at its usual venue, the World Trade Center.

The last FCBAI Bakery Fair 2007 which had 54 booths and 4 pavilions, and attracted more than 10,000 visitors has come to be the highest profile bakery show in the Philippines. Majority of the visitors were owners, followed closely by traders and students, bakery and food technologists, and those in the food service industry.

This year, there will be a total of 108 booths + for cake displays, machineries and equipment, bakery ingredients, tools and packaging materials, and other bakery-related products. Also featured are equipment, baked goods and products from the various food associations, coffee and beverages and gift items and cake boxes. There will also be an international pavilion, seminar halls, and prestigious contests. As with previous years there will be international speakers who will share their experiences, knowledge and insights on baking, baking supplies and equipment, bakery operations and the baking industry in general.

With lovely treats to go before the grand event, everyone at FCBAI is hoping their wish on the grandeur so that this year's trade expo will be as good as if not greater than, the last.

All the booths on various physical arrangement are still in place exhibitors, sponsors and suppliers are properly coordinating so that guest doesn't just the going on the table, or to speak, to take care of.

With a little luck, lots of hard work and a solid vision, FCBAI will make this a banner year — global event or no global crisis.

FILIPINO-CHINESE BAKERY ASSOCIATION, INC.
BAKERY FAIR 2009
The 5th International Exhibition on Bakery, Confectionery and Foodservice Equipment & Supplies
February 19 – 21, 2009 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM
World Trade Center - Exhibition Halls 1 to 3 Road West, cor. Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Pasay City
Metro Manila, Philippines

ADMISSION IS FREE BUT CHILDREN 12 YEARS OLD AND BELOW ARE NOT ALLOWED. VISITORS WEARING BERMUDAS, SINGLETS, SHORTS, SPORTS SANDALS OR SLIPPERS ARE NOT PERMITTED ENTRY.

Saudi king appoints first woman to Cabinet position

RIYADH—SAUDI ARABIA'S KING ABDULlah replaced the central bank governor of 26 years on Saturday as part of a broad government reshuffle that included the appointment of the first Saudi woman to a Cabinet position.

Ibrahim Al-Assaf did not offer the key oil and finance ministries, according to royal decrees announcing the changes.

King Abdullah appointed Mohammad al-Jasser, vice governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (Samia) since 1995, to the post of governor, replacing Hamad Saud Al-Sayyari who has been at the helm since 1983.

Finance Minister Ibrahim Al-Assaf said Jasser's appointment would not lead to a change of policy. "I don't expect that (change) ... There will be continuity," Assaf told Dubai-based al-Arabiya television.

Jasser's experience as the Saudi representative in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will give him a better understanding of the growing expectations the world has of Saudi Arabia in the global economic crisis, said John Sfakianakis, chief economist at HSBC's Saudi subsidiary.

"Here is one of the best representatives that Saudi Arabia has to speak to the outside world, he knows the mechanisms of the IMF and the World Bank," Sfakianakis said.

Jasser will maintain the consistency of the Saudi central bank because this is the characteristic of Saudi Arabia ... You take a long-term view," he added.

Under his rule, the world's largest oil exporter pegged its riyal currency to the US dollar in 1986 and opted for a conservative policy on investing its cash surpluses.

King Abdullah also appointed Nezar al-Fayez as deputy education minister, the highest government post so far filled by a woman.

Saudi Arabia, an Islamic state which applies an austere version of Sunni sharia law often accused Wahhabism, has repeatedly been criticized by international human rights organizations for discriminating against women.

The reshuffle also saw the replacement of Ibrahim al-Ghaith, head of the commerce ministry police, the Commission for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, by Abdul-Aziz al-Humayyen.

Reuters

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Querol

THE BIGGEST WOMEN NEGOSYO EVENT OF THE YEAR!

BABAE Taman kang BAYAN!

NEGOSYO

MARCH 2, 2009 WORLD TRADE CENTER

1 MUMBAI ATTACK VICTIM STILL UNIDENTIFIED Photograph taken on Nov. 27, 2008, shows flames gushing out of The Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai, one of the sites attacked by militant gunmen. Nearly three months after the Mumbai attacks, two of the 163 people who were killed still remain unidentified—nameless and forgotten victims of the 60-hour siege. AFP

Job losses around the world could hit 50M by yearend–UN

PARIS—WORLDWIDE JOB LOSSES FROM THE recession that started in the United States in December 2007 could hit a staggering 50 million by the end of 2009, according to the International Labor Organization, a UN agency. The slowdown has already claimed 3.6 million American jobs.

High unemployment rates, especially among young workers, have led to protests in countries as varied as Latvia, Chile, Greece, Bulgaria and Iceland, and have contributed to strikes in Britain and France.

Last month, the government of Iceland, whose economy is expected to contract 10 percent this year, collapsed, and the prime minister moved up national elections after weeks of protests by Icelanders angered by soaring unemployment and rising prices.

The synchronized slowdown of so many economies was among the issues that global finance ministers took up at the Group of 7 meeting in Rome on Saturday.

"Nearly everybody has been caught by surprise at the speed in which unemployment is increasing, and are groping for a response," said Nicolas Veron, a fellow at Bruegel, a research center in Brussels, Belgium, that focuses on Europe's role in the global economy.

In emerging economies like in Eastern Europe, there are fears that growing joblessness might encourage a move away from free markets, pro-Western politics, while in developed countries unemployment could reduce efforts to protect local industries at the expense of global trade.

While the number of jobs in the United States has been falling since the end of 2007, the pace of layoffs in Europe, Asia and the developing world has caught up only recently as companies that resisted cuts in the past follow the lead of their American counterparts.

The International Monetary Fund expects that by the end of the year, global economic growth will reach its lowest point since the Depression, according to Charles Collyns, deputy director of the fund's research department. The fund said that growth had come to "a virtual halt," with developed economies expected to shrink by 2 percent in 2009.

"This is the worst we've had since 1929," said Laurent Wauquiez, France's employment minister. "The thing that is new is that it is global, and we are always talking about that. It is in every country, and it makes the whole difference." AFP

Recession reality bites as France joins global rout

PARIS—FOR A WHILE FRANCE once stole a step to half-dodge the worst of the global economic crisis, but now jobs are being slashed across the country, recession is inevitable and social discontent is rampant.

Last week national champions such as Air France-KLM, Europe's biggest airline, and PSA-Peugeot-Citroen, Europe's second biggest carmaker, announced massive losses and plans to cut spending and shed thousands of jobs.

The French economy's recent relatively managed to expand by 0.1 percent in the third quarter of 2008 after contracting in the second, thereby narrowly averting recession, declined in two successive quarters of negative growth.

But the latest official data released on Thursday showed that the economy shrank by 1.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008, prompting the government to concede that recession was inevitable this year.

"After having been one of the rare European countries where economic activity increased in the third quarter, France ... suffered from the negative effects of the financial crisis," Finance Minister Christine Lagarde said.

She attributed the fourth quarter results to a 6 percent fall in company investment, "a sign of hesitancy in the face of a very uncertain climate," as well as to "a crisis in the auto sector." Car manufacturing employs one French worker in 10, but the sector has fallen on such hard times that President Nicolas Sarkozy plans to fund PSA Peugeot Citroen and Renault (here billion euros ($13.9 billion) each. AFP

US drone attack kills 30 in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN—Two missiles fired from American drones unleashed attacks that killed more than 30 people, including al-Qaida and Taliban fighters, near the Pakistani border with Afghanistan on Saturday, according to a Pakistani intelligence official and local residents.

The missiles struck three compounds in South Waziristan, including one where the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud, and foreign and local fighters loyal to him sometimes gather, the official and residents said.

Mehsud, one of the most feared leaders in Pakistan's Islamist tribal areas, was not among those killed, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the news media.

Mehsud, a Pakistani, has fought the government openly in the past, and government and intelligence officials say he is a key ally of Mullah Omar, the reclusive Taliban leader who is believed to be hiding in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. Mehsud's fighters have also been linked to attacks in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has been under pressure from the United States to crack down on militants who have been using Pakistan's tribal areas as a base for attacks in Afghanistan. Pakistan has also been struggling to contain militants in the Swat Valley and the Bajaur and Mohmand tribal areas. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Old Canlubang** stars back in 'regular' PAL Interclub (A31)

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molavedra • Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Dichoso

- **'Kryptonite'** grounds 'Superman' (A32)

Hatton trainer wants Valero as sparmate

VALERO

By Cedrill P. Tejano

ONE OF THE TRAINERS OF RICKY HATTON thinks Venezuelan knockout artist Edwin Valero would be an ideal sparring partner for the British "Hitman" as he prepares for his mega-bout showdown with Filipino star Manny Pacquiao on May 2 in Las Vegas.

In a recent interview posted on Hatton's website, Lee Beard said that if he had his way, he would get Valero to spar with Hatton, pointing out that both the Venezuelan and Pacquiao have similar fighting styles.

"I think that if you can adjust to him, then it's the closest thing you can get to Pacquiao, and the second would suggest he has as hard if not harder class [than Manny]," Beard said.

Valero had claimed to have kept Orzcar De La Hoya in sparring values that "Golden Boy" was giving up for the battle with Pacquiao. Pacquiao crushed De La Hoya with a right hook and his lethal knockout.

Beard pointed a picture of Hatton as a relentless and unforgiving puncher in sparring.

"I've seen sparring partners brought in for Ricky that were 150 to 155 lb and can pop, first time Ricky hit him...it was over," he said.

"The sparring lasted 30 seconds, the guy had the fastest hands I'd seen and he ran around the ring and I thought to myself, 'Ricky easy straight to land a punch here,' but then he did land one to the chest and the guy hit the deck and didn't get back up." They had to send him home there and then."

Beard, in the same interview, predicted that Hatton would knock out Pacquiao in six rounds and declared that the Filipino's fighting style has all sorts of flaws that the Ravish Rimmon is ready to exploit.

"In this fight I believe that Manny will make the same mistakes as normal and Ricky will capitalize," he continued. "If Ricky does get his shots off when these mistakes are made, this fight could be a lot easier for Ricky than people think."

Sting expert Michael Morley of boxingconfidential.com, however, laughed off Beard's comments, saying that Valero and Jhul Maligsaguit, veteran Hatton defeated by knockout late last year, are nowhere near Pacquiao's quality.

"HANDA KA NA BA?"

This Valentine season get a Free Honeymoon packet at the following outlets:

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HONEY MOON

"HINDI KA MAGSISISI!"

Receipt of this Honeymoon Set. Buy only from authorized drugstores and dealers.

Rich Malaysian payday for Que and Pagunsan

QUE: $23,968

PAGUNSAN: $20,800

KUALA LUMPUR—ANGELO QUE SHOWED flashes of his brilliant form but wasn't to keep overnight-added six-under-par 66 Sunday to salvage cash for 10th place in the $2-million Maybank Malaysian Open won by former Philippine Open champion Anthony Kang.

Que, the reigning PIP Open titlist who avoided last year's British Open bid, pulled up $25,968 in his finished with a 13-under 275 to, sit on during times of 34-31 in the Empress Golf and Country Club course.

Interesting enough, on the front Tour's second event were on, Que regard the par-5 12th hole to highlight his closing stretch after starting a mark of 73-70-68.

Que, who languished in 40th place in the tourney's second four rounds, also gunned down seven birdies and could have finished among the frontrunners if not for three bogeys, two of them going out.

Jamie Pagunsan, a newcomer last week to the circuit he shared with this exciting rounds his co-weekend, heavily talented underdog up with Que as he bogeyed the 18th hole to finish with a 68 and a 279 total.

With his earlier rounds of 69-73-70, Pagunsan bagged $20,800 and raised to No. 9 in the Asian Order of Merit with a one-week payday of $34,000.

Marc Pucay rallied with a 71 and took home $8,000 with a 280 total while Frenchie Arellano limped home with a 76 for 290 total to tie 20th.

Kang, a Korean American who added the 1999 Casino Filipino-Philippine Open at the Manila Southwoods for his breakthrough money on the Asian Tour, came from behind to win the tournament by a stroke with a closing 67.

A birdie on the final hole gave Kang a 271 total and the surprise of $203,320.

Tied for second in 272 were Mikko Ilonen (68) and David Howell of England, Prayad Marksaeng of Thailand and Jyoti Randhawa of India.

Retief Goosen and Mattheuw Goel Abe, Randhawa shot 69 and Howell had a 64.

Third-round leader Adam Blyth of Australia finished 10th at 275. Matteuw David Chin, who led after two rounds, ended tied for 11th at 276 with last-round aces Nick Dougherty and Ross Bram.

Adam Duer Mace

Down seeking 1st Ucla championship

HOST UP FINISHED OF Ateneo College-level [illegible] over their [illegible] in [illegible] 73-[illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

MIGUEL Molino

PSA honors Beijing Olympics wushu medalists

By Ronnina S. Juanita

MIGUEL MOLINO, OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST AND the source of an unusual basketball request that nowadays haunts in the Philippine Basketball League will get a chance to bask in the limelight anew.

To be feted during the San Miguel-PSA annual awards night along with the country's Beijing Olympians are wushu athletes who won medals in a special international competition held during the Beijing Olympics: Willy Wang (gold), Marian Marlene Bermejo, Benjie Alexis Rosario and Mary Jane Mitzie Gilbert.

Harbour Center senior and basketball goalie Mike Romero, cager Jayson Castro, Gold-summer Jayson Gonzales and John Paul Gomez. PSA's three-time 2008 Sun Stole, UAAP senior and Ateneo basketball sensation Heidi Mendoza-ge Rabeh Al-Hussaini and world champion Gerry Peñalosa will also be cited for their achievements in the two-time stint sponsored by the Philippine Sportswriters and Training Corp.

Despite bombing out in the quadrennial Games, the members of the Philippine team so the Beijing Olympics are to be hosted by the Philippine Sportswriters Association on Feb. 28 at the Ateneo Lounge of the Manila Pavilion.

Chairma will be guest of honor Sharry Telfortes, trademarks pin Miss Universe threes and Shandree Co, divine Shaka Star Sonic and Ryan Gerard Sibuga, shooter Eric Ang, weightlifter Mirfaie Diaz, taekwondo Sherry Dagatol and Marinelle Torres, archer Mark Javier and swimmers Miguel Molina, Ryan Arabejo, Daniel Dealog, James Hodde and Richard Gomez.

Wushu lightweight champion Marian Bermejo hoisted the 59 sports honorees as 2008 athletes of the Year and Hall of Fame inductees.

The 15 major awardees are Toyota Cup of Gold champions Jennifer Reantaso and teammates Bella Pelletan (pas Sachs-Gold), Toyota Defender (pro boxing), Wesley So (chess), Gilby Ninang (crossfit), Genesis Heralde (billiards), Angelico Jimenez and Dennis Andres (golf), jockey Jonathan Hernandez and Valentino Dimaculangan (horse racing) and Summer Rimon and Cris Isaac.

Awards night banner: Miss Universe 2005 Precious Lara Quigaman, Miss Universe 2008 Riyo Mori, Miss Universe 2006 Natasha Ledwidge, Miss Universe 2007 Dayanara Torres, Jackie Rice, Miss Universe 2004 Justine Pasek, Miss Universe Philippines Nicole Cordoves, Jayson Castro and Gilbert Gomez, senior Ateneo Basketball Team Coach Norman Black, Ateneo Lady Eagles Basketball Team Coach Timothy Cone and Ateneo Lady Eagles Basketball Team Coach Bo Perasol. (MIKE DE LEON)

Chief executive, the man Sara Lorge and billionaire singer Kenneth Cobonpue, Miss Universe Philippines Nicole Cordoves, Miss Universe 2004 Justine Pasek, Miss Universe 2006 Natasha Ledwidge, Miss Universe 2005 Precious Lara Quigaman, Miss Universe 2008 Riyo Mori, Miss Universe 2007 Dayanara Torres, Jackie Rice, Jayson Castro, Gilbert Gomez, Ateneo Lady Eagles Basketball Team Coach Timothy Cone and Ateneo Lady Eagles Basketball Team Coach Bo Perasol. (MIKE DE LEON)

PBA Fiesta Cup opens in Dumaguete

By Macong R. Castillo

TALK 'N TEXT, WHICH WON THE PHILIPpines' Cup last Wednesday, will have less than two weeks to celebrate as the Tropang Texters open their bid in the six-point-spired Fiesta Cup on March 1 opposite Purefoods.

With Yeng Guiao in import, the Texters try to get back into fighting shape again and avoid coming out the tournament with a whimper after coming out from a grueling seven-game title series with Alaska.

Defending champion Barangay Ginebra, which is still awaiting the return of leading local scorer Mark Caguioa, will not play until March 4, when the Gin Kings clash with Coca-Cola at the Ynares Center.

Burger King, formerly Air21, and Sta. Lucia clash at the Lumbocto Marino Gym in Dumaguete City on Feb. 28 to raise the curtain on the league's second conference.

Almost all the teams have signed up their reinforcements, with four old faces returning, led by the burly Marcus Daniels, who will have another tour of duty with Burger King. Rod Study and big up for Ginebra, JJ Jalibuger for the Tigers and Charles Clark for Sun or three.

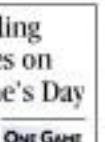
Clark and the Kings Painter also get to enlist their stuff on March 1 when they collide with Rambler Bull.

Philippine Cup runner-up Alaska, which is eying to re-enlist Russell Ellis, battles San Miguel also on March 4 at the Ynares Center in Antipolo.

San Miguel has tapped former Oklahoma University hooper Sam Cassell, one of five new faces sure to suit up along with the Beermen' Asi Jackson and Paintbrush Peggie Lardy. Brandon Bell will be reinforced by former Michigan

BETTER BLINDFOLDED! Shaquille O'Neal of the Phoenix Suns, a notorious no-leaguer from the stripe, shoots free throws blindfolded to jaw during team practice for the NBA All-Star basketball game in Phoenix, Ariz. one. Don voted All-Star stars at ALL AGES

Trading blades on Valentine's Day



ONE GAME AT A TIME

Art Sumaylo

VISITING A SPORT up close for the first time is like treating an undiscovered country.

You're entering a world owned by the participants. Allow the sport to play out before you ask the right questions.

The UAAP first-ever competition at the Blue Eagle Gym in Loyola Heights has Feb. 12 to 14 as its deadline for participants to put 'Member's Only plans on hold until after the matches.

Wooing may not have the large crowd that other games attract but the participants are just as passionate, engaging in a sport that means something to them.

This is their "Final Dance" their main event. Valentine's Day can wait.

Six of the eight UAAP wheels fielded fencers for individual and team bouts in the three sword duels: epee, saber and foil.

Each sword has unique characteristics and history. Sabers address going into openfiles, you can still thus each one was inspired by actual duels of previous centuries.

* * *

Combat sports have their own rules of engagement. Like taekwondo, judo or karate, fencing is stopped in proper behavior. Infancing on doubt the violent possibilities of combat.

Hollow at the color of combat with only hearts and streaks of school colors appearing occasionally. Proper fists and body protection is worn by all.

Cheering is allowed but never at the expense of the dignity of the sport.

The individual matches can entail grants yelling, words of encouragement for teammates and serious advice. The team bouts had fencers schooping it up after every point scored. These are young people, after all, savoring the joy of athletic competition.

* * *

Like all sports, there are of course rookies and veterans.

Rafaella "Raf" Santiago of Ateneo, a fast rising senior sophomore, is practically just starting out but is already a member of the varsity in high school at Colegio de Sta. Rosa, she was already into shooting but discovered the challenge of fencing when she took it as a PE option in college.

Michelle Brando of the University of Sto. Tomas 2007 SEA Games individual epee gold medalist. She started out in volleyball but a friend encouraged her to try fencing. A senior Information Technology student, she dreams of making the Olympics one day but is aware of the difficult road ahead.

Sto. Tomas' varsity team aims to an Asian qualifier where a Japanese team loomed her. The 21-year old isn't nervous about donning the national colors but considers it exciting, more than anything else.

* * *

As you stay in this world for a while, you reflect on the yearning of each discipline for glory, recognition for the win and how other countries seem to be more involved in a sport like fencing.

Similar acceptance may take a little while in coming but as long as there are young people engaged in the sport and we give them the opportunities and venues to play, fencing in the Philippines will never lose appeal to participants.

Tryouts slated for young nat'l cagebelles

By Jasmine W. Payo

A TWO-DAY TRYOUT FOR METRO Manila players this weekend kicks off the country's search for fresh talents for the women's juniors and youth basketball teams.

"This is the first of a series of tryouts we are going to hold for the women's youth and junior basketball teams. With the support of SBP we hope we can attract a large number of aspirants," said Dimdim Sy, the top person of the women's national program and chair of Dove Bikota Cosmetics.

"We believe in the vision of SBP that for the country to become number one in both the men and women's divisions, we should maximize on elite and grassroots program for the youth sector," he added.

The Nokia Filipinas under-16 junior men's team starts its bid-up in April with at least four activities slated for the squad bestowed by second-generation players Ray Parks of St. George International School, Xavier's Arvin Tang and Ateneo's Richi Pacheco.

The 16-man roster will leave for Australia in July a tournament and saga camp from April 11 to 22 after a stint in the Nike Elite Basketball Camp as host in Laguna from April 2 to 6.

The young nationals are also competing in the Mobox Invitational in Japan and the Nike Summer League in the west run rounds.

The women's tryouts will be conducted by coach Pat Aquino of Women's Philippine Basketball League champion Red Bikota.

Only applicant born in 1992 and 1993 will be showing their wares on Feb. 21 and 22, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon, at the Sports Arena Center in San Juan.

Basketballed by Nokia Philippines and Tao Corp., the junior men's team under coach Eric Altamirano will debut in international competition in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association U16 Championship Junior Men Qualifying Tournament from July 25 to 29.

SCORE ONE FOR PEACE Toni Leviste (fifth from left) may be engaged in her non-personal battles at the moment, but this champion equestrienne is also committed to the cause of a different kind: just recently, Leviste and the Young Mars Philippines Network (YMPN) plus over 100 concerned Muslim and Christian volunteers rallied as a call for unity in a symbolic inter-faith bloodletting activity, dubbed "Isang Dugo, Isang Bansa (Type Mo, Type Ko)," held at the Philippine National Red Cross headquarters in Manila. The event was attended by Sen. Richard Gordon, the PNRC exec who joined the call for an end to violence in Mindanao in the wake of the abduction of three international Red Cross workers by the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu.

SPORTSWATCH

Gold Quest derby fires off at Makati today

A STELLAR CAST OF JOCKEYS AND RIDERS GUARANTEE A FURIOUS BATTLE today in Gold Quest Champions 5-cook derby at the Makati Coliseum.

Sportswriter Chang Bok Cruz, fresh off his victory in the Las Piñas Bigtime A-Cook Derby last Thursday, is hosting the event which offers P500,000 to the winners. Bok Cruz also won the 2007 PSSM Breeder of the Year and the 2008 PCAP Center of the Year titles.

Among today's competitors are former governor Ito Ynares, Undersecretary Joe Santiago and business group of the NCA Bienjie Lim, Chief Executive Henry Villarica, Mayor Jerry Poblete, Bodil Aguilar and Benny Sison.

P15.5-M 'Rambulan' gets going at SJC

THE ANNUNCIATION CHAPEL AND ALL OF HELL ARE STARTING TODAY in the P15.5-million Nationwide Rambulan 9-Cock Derby at the San Juan Coliseum.

Derby aces are tabbed in the total of forty because of the big prize of P1-million, "sure CLFC pit managers Erik dela Pena and Bobby Chavez.

Forty-one cocks from Lapon, Visayas and Mindanao will join 500 "Rambulan" eliminator rounds.

This year's cock entries of the "Rambulan" comes in the tenth of the 2008 Rambulan staggled which lured 1,778 entries.

Bolivar, Maquilan rule Batangas Milo 21K elims

ALQUIN BOLIVAR of the Philippine Army won in the 21-mile fashion while Rafael Maquilan cruised invincible-ness yesterday in the homestretch leg of the 42nd Milo Marathon.

Turning up the heat in the final 3.00 meters, Bolivar clocked one hour, 13 minutes and 20 seconds to edge Gerald Salud by just two seconds in the men's 21.8 event.

It was the third leg title since 2005 for Bolivar, who banked a return trip to the national finals on Oct. 11 in Manila.

Bolivar first drove toward the field early on with Rafael and Salud at the head of the chasing pack, before the six-time Milo national champion faded in the stretch.

Wenz, the 40-year-old former Olympian, eventually finished third at 1:13:39, followed by Dennis Lim, who clocked 1:14:03.

"The run was so difficult because the three of us were really going at it," Bolivar said in Filipino.

The top two male runners in the Batangas elimination race breached the qualifying time of 1:15 for the 42K national finals.

Maquilan clocked 1:26:37 to rule the women's race and easily battle the qualifying time of 1:35.

Wedding is for second last falling to meet the criteria with Mirlen Bautista (1:37:40), followed by Janeth Lapeza (1:52:26).

ROGER Saniata and Cecile Faith Tapia show their trophies after topping the Bigas race. With them are (from left) Milo sports coordinator Jun Macapobre, Batangas Governor Vilma Santos-Recto and Milo Inter-Basketball Coach Chino Trinidad. Vice Mayor Henry Dy, Mayor Lemuel Cruz. Vice Mayor Eugene Bautista and national race director Rudy Biscocho.

Isla, Pia Guerrero joined the women's 21K event and clocked 2:00:07.

There was no national qualifier in a mixed tandem race held in Bigas City yesterday, but it was one hot stage of climate ridden.

Roger Saniata up made one big push in the last 500 meters to emerge as the top finisher in the men's race then ended at the Freedom Park Plaza.

The 39-year-old Amerio-ap's clocking of 1:13:19 proved enough to beat Jeffrey Isaac, and Edgar Lapasanjan and race for fans the P30,000 cash prize.

But his time was 13 seconds short of the qualifying mark for the national race.

Cecile Faith Tapia topped the women's race, but also missed out on a berth to the national finals, after clocking 1:40:16.

Winning the 10K side races in the Bigas elimination were Mark Glenn Arellano (35:18) and Jamaica Rivera (1:22:11).

Steve Allen, Contributor

Romero heads Forum guests

MANDALUYONG CITY Mayor BENJIE REMIGIO heads this week's guests at the PSA Forum at Shakey's. At the usual breakfast, he talks about the plans to host the Philippine Basketball League and Philippine Basketball Association.

Romero will be accompanied by Tre Angela, team manager of Burger King in the PBA.

Former PSC commissioner Tolentino and participants in the Pilipinas Ladies march volleyball tournament are also expected to be guests. The program airs live over DZSR Sports Radio 918 and sponsored by Shakey's. Scott Padgett and Gaman Gamboa.

Amazing Adamson batters post big sweep

By Cordell P. Tapao

ADAMSON OVERwhelmed Ateneo, 12-0, yesterday to complete a sweep of the UAAP baseball tournament a day after the Lady Eagles also rolled over softball competition in dominating fashion.

The lopsided win gave the Eagles at the Rizal Memorial Stadium win the 18th straight for the Falcons, who clinched their ninth crown overall.

Marvin Mella, a standout from Sta. Rita, starred for the Falcons, releasing four individual records, including the Most Valuable Player and best hitter honors.

The 20-year-old Mella highlighted his campaign by blasting a league-record three home runs in a 15-3 victory over Technical University last week.

The baseball softball title double more than made up for Adamson's disappointing campaign in men's volleyball, where the Falcons missed out on a Final Four berth.

La Salle clinched the second female-event laurel in the tournament, after toppling University of the Philippines, 25-22, 25-23, 12-25, 25-22 at The Arena in San Juan.

The Green Archers closed out their elimination-round campaign with a 10-4 mark.

University of the Visayas entered the first twice-to-beat advantage after sweeping the 14-game elimination round.

UP fell in a tie-of-third place with Mapua at 9-5. The Maroons and Eagles clash in a playoff for the No. 3 berth...and the right to face La Salle—in the Final Four on Wednesday.

La Salle took the No. 1 seed in the women's tournament with a 25-21, 25-12, 11-25, 25-15 sweep over Far Eastern U.

The win, which improved the Lady Archers' crowded to 13-1, snapped the Lady Tamaraws' 11-game winning streak.

FEU worked for the second-best mark of 12-2 at the end of the eliminations. Both La Salle and FEU have the twice-to-beat edge in the Final Four.

Adamson and UST completed the Final Four race with identical 9-5 records.

HOBIE cats converge on Boracay Island at the end of the punishing five-day regatta that started off Laiya Beach in San Juan, Batangas.

Gritty Aussie pair sweeps 10th RP Hobie Challenge

By George Llavora, Contributor

BORACAY ISLAND—RACING IN THE PHILIPpine waters with grim precision, Australian sailors Bob Fitzpatrick and Bradley Wilson swept all four legs to capture a fifth straight championship in the full-course and Buoy-over 16th Philippine Hobie Challenge that ended over the weekend off this island paradise.

Fitzpatrick and Wilson, unbeaten in the "Flying Dogs," shut out a dozen other competitive boats coming in the 300-mile, five-day regatta that sailed off Monday off Laiya Beach in San Juan, Batangas.

The tandem of Bruce Tomkins and Sandy Tomkins captured runner-up honors, while the pair of Andrew Leslie and Stewart Bevan settled for third to make it a sweep for Australia in the annual sailing competition.

Fresh off their victory in the recent HAAs before Santa Cruz off Zambales and Boracay, Fitzpatrick and Wilson topped the 1st Leg Race, the second Client leg from Batangas to Mariveles. They went on to take the Sport Sandbar Personal Trophy Race from Mariveles to Bataan, the Athlete Personal Race from Bataan to Subic, and the Fleet-32 Race from Subic to Boracay.

The regatta—which also drew sailors from the US, Germany, Portugal, New Zealand and Spain—is the country's top sailing/boating event hosted by the Department of Tourism, the race aims to promote the Philippines as a top destination for extreme sports.

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Old Canlubang stars back in 'regular' PAL Interclub

By Marvey R. Castillo

CANLUBANG WILL STRIVE FOR ITS SECOND "FOUR-PEAT" IN the Philippine Airlines Interclub Championship in two weeks by bicycle using its old heads.

After losing some of its players to retirement, Canlubang will welcome Alex Pinol, former World Mountain champion Jaime Hernandez and Tommy Manotoc for the Interregular championship.

For the first time in quite a while, the Sugar Barons will return the tournament not fixed as the favorites, with The Country Club, which will be bumped by members from the ICTSI squad headed by reigning Philippine Amateur champ Emilio Alano, found as the odds-on favorite.

"The dearth of players is not theirs has given us no other choice." Canlubang manager/coach Lyngl Yalo told the reporters recently. "We lost the players we have developed and we need these veterans to help us to finish."

Pinol, who has returned back to amateur, Hernandez and Manotoc will be ready to play in the competitive division that tees off on Feb. 20, but Yalo said that, depending on the need, the Sugar Barons can use the top Mint Hernandezes and Hanks Labajo.

Canlubang lost Joey Huerta, Peter Villaber and Fidias Reyson to ICTSI after last year's fifth romp in Bacolod, leaving a huge vacuum in the roster that is bolstered by pockets of its development pool led by nationals Jessie Ball, andres, Jozel Alcalde and Mak Fernando.

Interestingly, Canlubang completed its first string of four straight championships either in the decade-close at Apo Golf, one of two courses which will be used this year and where the tournament is mostly decided.

Rambo Pulse "Rodeo, a well-manicured, up-and-down layout, will be the other venue.

The Sugar Barons actually was completed on not entering the men's regular tournament, which comes two days after the Seniors' championship where they are favored with Manotoc and Co.

It will be the first Canlubang, The Country Club duel after the Sugar Barons opted not to send its team to the 1st PAL in Baguio, where the TCC area dominated the Eldfield and narrowly missed a sweep by yielding the Ace title to Southwoods.

THE DEARTH of young, young players has forced Canlubang to recall Bruno Ich, above (rider icon) to ward off yesterday Tommy Manotoc, Dave Hernandez and Alex Rosales to entice duty for the PAL Interclub.

Meantime didn't play in the regular division for the past years, opting to play up his old to younger players, while Bond skipped play for two years after deciding to become a teaching pro.

Hernandez left the regular division to join Rosales play last year.

Others left in the Canlubang roster are young guns Zennie Rey Gaston, Paul Echonez and Bacolod discovery Alexis Espino.

RMSC facelift long overdue

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2005, WHEN the country last hosted the the Southeast Asian Games, the aging Rizal Memorial Sports Complex will be getting a facelift.

Since the 1950s, members of the defunct Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation executive committee headed by the late Antonio de Las Alas had either hatched the renovation or the improvement of existing facilities at the RMSC.

The sports complex was finished in 1934 at a cost of P1.5 million during the administration of President Manuel L. Quezon.

Once the envy of the Asian neighbors, the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex is now in a state of disrepair.

This is certainly one of the big challenges facing Philippine Sports Commission chairman Jolly Angeles, a two-term congressman from Manila's first district.

Angeles, first serving his second term in 2004's 10th Congress from No. 7751 seeking the position of a committee "that shall identify a site in Manila and conduct a study for the construction of a new modern sports complex which is ideal for international sports events."

Unfortunately, nothing much was heard of it since. May the resolution shelved because of lack of funds? Or was it because it didn't pass through the bureaucracy.

* * *

Now that President Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed Angeles as PSC chair, the 57-year-old former president of the so-dicted softball association and Dr. La Salle University MS management graduate, must not stray too much from the sports-agency's lack of funding or how to cut through the bureaucratic red tape.

After all, he now holds the purse strings and is responsible only to the President for his actions.

On his stint at the PSC, bugging said: "The worst enemies of efficient of many and years is into income-generating units."

He said he would order various establishments located at the sports complex like bookmakers and off-track betting stations.

"We want a clean image for the sports complex. I'll talk to the owners in a nice way before any evictionary."

The new PSC chair said he already has about P100-million for the needed repair of the track, football oval, the electronic scoreboards, baseball stadium and remaining pool and the improvement of the air-conditioning units at the historic Rizal Coliseum and Shaw Aquatic Stadium.

This augurs well for Philippine sports, a step in the right direction.

* * *

I agree with former Philippine Basketball Association chair Eddy Thiptu, when he said that, "good performance in an international competition has a link to an increased interest in basketball in the country, and this indirectly affects the PBA."

But statistics showed that attendance in the PBA dropped dramatically after each decade in the Asian Games, starting with the Beijing Asiad in 1990.

Does the "Living Legend" of Philippine basketball, former senator Robert Jaworski, was quoted as saying: "Bisyag sa inyong magpatayo?" when the Big Three asked to comment recently on the proposition to bring substitutes by the national players that will compete in forthcoming international tournaments.

Ying Green, head coach of the 1986-bucked national age team, is preparing for the Fiba-Asia qualifying tournament to be held in China this year with the winner making it to the 2010 World Basketball Championship in Istanbul, Turkey.

On the other hand, Pedro Taruman, the 30-year-old Ateneo coach who was signed up by the Sacobeng Basketball ng Pilipinas as program director of the national basketball program, is preparing for the year's Southeast Asian Games in Laos (where basketball is still a doubtful event), the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou, China, and the 2010 Fiba-Asia Championship, the qualifying event for the 2012 London Olympic Games, among others.

Taruman Manuel V. Pangilinan heads the SBP with Sobhan as executive director.

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SPORTS

'Kryptonite' grounds 'Superman'

SUPERMAN'S WEAKNESS Nate Robinson swings over Dwight Howard on the way to ruling the dunk-contest coronet. AP PHOTO

MIAMI—DRESSED IN AN ALL-GREEN ENSEMBLE THAT HAD television commentators referring to him as "kryptonite," diminutive New York Knicks guard Nate Robinson proved to be a perfect foil to Dwight Howard's "Superman" and defeated the defending champion in an electrifying NBA slam dunk contest on Saturday.

Robinson won 52 percent of fans' votes in claim the dunk crown.

Clad in an all-green Knicks uniform with green shoes and using a green ball, Robinson used Howard as a prop in the final round, springboarding over the 6-foot-11 center to jam.

"Dwight is a great sport for letting me dunk over him," said Robinson, who also won in 2006.

Howard, who scored a perfect 50 on both of his first-round dunks, performed the most theatrical dunk of the night to the first round.

He disappeared into a phone booth just off the court, emerging with a Superman cape.

Howard wound his arms in the cape to an 11-foot (3.4-meter) basket was relieved me- to the floor. Howard took a bounce pass from teammate Jameer Nelson and behind-handed a dunk as US Airways Center exploded.

Robinson disappeared into the dugout after qualifying for the finals and did not watch Howard execute his final jam. Commentators speculated that he might have injured himself on one of his jams. But the 5-foot-9 playmaker emerged to an all-green group and unleashed ostensibly referred to him as kryptonite and "Lex Luthor," referring to Superman's arch-nemesis.

Portland's Rudy Fernandez and Denver's JR Smith were eliminated in the first round.

Three-point king

Miami's Dwayne Cook won the HBA 3 Point Shootout from Orlando's Rashard Lewis and ousted Jason Kapono's two-year run-at champion.

When the long-distance contest went to overtime, Cook posted the best round of the competition with 29 points.

Lewis sputtered in the final session, scoring for First 11 shots to finish with seven points.

Cook had fewest attempt by hitting his final four shots in the second round of the six-man competition.

Kapono came up one point short in the second round. The Toronto Raptors sharpshooter was trying to become the third player to capture three straight titles in the event, following former Chicago Bulls guard Craig Hodges, who won from 1990-92, and Steven Hall of Fancy Larry Bird, who won from 1986-88.

Mike Bibby of Atlanta, Danny Granger of Indiana and Roger Mason of San Antonio were eliminated in the first round. Bibon is something of a local villain after hitting a three-pointer of the buzzer to lead the Spurs to a 91-90 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Christmas Day.

Skills challenge

Chicago's Derrick Rose capped his Skills Challenge victory with a double-pump reverse dunk.

Rose defeated Nets Jersey's Devin Harris in the final round, navigating the obstacle course consisting of dribbling, passing and shooting was done in 25.3 seconds, 0.4 seconds faster than Harris.

Cleveland's Mo Williams and San Antonio's Tony Parker were eliminated after the first round. Williams took third with a time of 27.5 seconds after replacing Orlando guard Jameer Nelson, who has a torn right hamstring.

Parker was frozen—as our point given the Spurs' bitter rivalry with Jean Hornets. The crowd was delighted when he finished fourth in 30.8 seconds after missing several jumpers.

Shooting stars

The Shooting Stars competition, which features a player from an NBA team, a retired player from that team and a player from that city's WNBA club, was won by Team Detroit—former Pistons Bill Laimbeer, present Pistons guard Arron Afflalo and Detroit Shock star Kelly Smith. Detroit defeated Team Phoenix in the final.

Team Detroit now owners up last year and won the contest in 2007 in which players shoot from six locations of increasing difficulty.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

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The Regional Trial Court, Branch 24, of Cabugao, Ilocos Sur, issued a Warrant of Arrest against the abovenamed persons for Syndicated Estafa, punishable under Section 1 of Presidential Decree 1689.

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Stanford denies Wie maiden LPGA triumph

STANFORD AFP

KARRIE HAWAII—ANGELA STANFORD spoiled Michelle Wie's bid for a victory in her first start as a US LPGA Tour member, overcoming a double-bogey debut to win the season-opening HSBC Open by three shots on Saturday.

Stanford closed with a 2-under 70 for a 49-under 206 total at wind-swept Turtle Bay, giving her her fourth career win and third in seven starts. Wie had a disappointing 73 for two-over and runner-up finish in her second start.

Brazilian four Angela Park struggled in the windswept and had a 78 to tie for third with South Korea's Na Yeon Choi (69) at 8-under 212, six strokes behind Stanford.

Taiwan's Yani Tseng (72), the 2008 rookie of the year, and Japan's Ai Miyazato (71) were 5 under and Grace Kim (69), Sarah Lee (69) and Brittany Lang (72) followed at 2 under.

The 18-year-old hometown favorite Wie was making along, but made a double bogey on No. 13 that gave Stanford the opening she needed.

"I just had one bad hole," Wie said. "I'm kind of disappointed in that. But there's a lot of positive things I can take from this week."

Bowled by a stroke with six holes to play, Stanford used her team to shoot her way back to the top of the leaderboard. She birdied three straight holes to reach 10 under and take a two-stroke lead over Wie with three holes to play.

The late birdie flurry provided Stanford complete momentum, while Wie helplessly watched. Wie had a chance to cut into Stanford's lead on No. 16, but tapped out a 30-inch birdie putt. She then bogeyed No. 17.

"That three nine, she didn't make a mistake. She was doing everything she needed to win," Stanford said. "When she made the mistake on 13, she didn't rebound. You could see her youth in that she didn't rebound as fast as she could have, I think."

AP

Nadal, Murray set showdown

NADAL REUTERS

ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS—Top-seeded Rafael Nadal avenged his only defeat of the year by ending Gael Monfils, 6-4, 6-4, to set up an ABN Amro final with Andy Murray on Saturday.

Monfils beat Nadal in the Doha quarterfinals last month. Now Nadal will meet the Doha champion, Murray, who swamped fifth-seeded Mardy Fish, 6-1, 6-2, in the other indoor semifinal.

Nadal broke Monfils in the fifth game of the second set and, despite the fifth-seeded Frenchman's 18 aces, went on to earn his first two-set win this week.

Two weeks after winning his first Australian Open, and ninth Grand Slam singles title, Nadal will play for his 32nd career title on Sunday. The Spaniard was off to a best ever 15-1 start to the year.

The Doha title was Murray's ninth in his career. He's reached his 15th ATP Tour final with only one loss this year, also.

After beating Australian Lleyton Hewitt in the second-round, Murray said, "Gospel road up facing Rafael Nadal in the final. Our matches are usually guaranteed to be a spectacle."

Nadal owns a 5-1 record against the Scot, but Murray was their last clash in the Q2 Open semifinals.

It will be a first Rotterdam final between the top two seeds since 1984, but Ivan Lendl and Stefan Edberg didn't play because of a break score.

Despite meeting a minor injury in his right foot, Murray dispatched Fish with four breaks.

AP

Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Carrie S. Nuñeza

BUSINESS

Metrobank drops bid for Philamlife

Banco de Oro, BPI still in the race

By Doris C. Dumlao

LOCAL BANKING GIANT METROPOLITAN BANK AND Trust Co., the banking arm of tycoon George Ty, has bowed out of the race to acquire the American International Group's local crown jewel Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co.

With Metrobank out of the race, four groups are still in the running and have been given access to preliminary Philamlife database and management presentations, sources in the banking industry said.

Access to Philamlife's database ended on Friday ahead of a Feb. 23 deadline set for tenders to submit the final binding proposal.

Those still in the race include Metrobank's toughest rivals Banco de Oro Unibank and Bank of the Philippine Islands as well as Taiwan-based global insurance player Mercuries Financial Corp. There is a fourth undisclosed group that is also in bid and has had access to data needed for a due-diligence audit, industry sources said.

Asked for an official word on whether Metrobank was joining the Feb. 23 bidding, a bank spokesperson was replied to the inquiries Friday night: "We will not participate. There's a change of direction."

PETROBANK, B4

Metro Pacific bags Cardinal Santos hospital

THE METRO PACIFIC GROUP LED by Manuel V. Pangilinan has bagged a 20-year concession from the Archdiocese of Manila to take over the Cardinal Santos Medical Center and invest at least P750 million in the premier hospital in Greenhills, San Juan.

Pangilinan, who chairs the First Pacific group's local holding company Metro Pacific Investments Corp., told the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila has appointed Makati Medical Center, through a wholly owned subsidiary, to serve over a 20-year operations and management contract for Cardinal Santos.

"Currently, we are finalizing the legal documents that will contain all the terms of agreement with the archdiocese," Pangilinan told reporters at the sidelines of a special stockholders' meeting of MPIC's infrastructure arm First Philippine Infrastructure Inc.

The wholly owned Makati Medical Center subsidiary that will sign the deal with the Archdiocese of Manila is Cardinal Santos Hospital

METRO B4

IN THIS ISSUE

- **SSS willing to finance big infra projects** /B2
- **Globe to borrow P12B for expansion this year** /B4
- **Cigarette smuggling costs gov't P29B/yr** /B6

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FEBRUARY

STOCK MARKET

Cautious trading seen

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(For more market coverage see Page B4)

THE LOCAL STOCK MARKET is seen reeling with caution this week given a barrage of negative economic news from and abroad.

The main share Philippine Stock Exchange ended 1.2-percent lower last week to 1,979.68. But the closing was deflected by a few stocks, particularly Manila Electric Co. as investors snapped up its shares on persistent speculation of a silent tug-of-war between the utility's two biggest shareholder groups—the Lopez family and San Miguel Corp.

It was a week where movers linked to San Miguel took center stage. Meralco's share price was up 19.4 percent while San Miguel's own share price gained 11 percent. Yuan Patrick Darg.,

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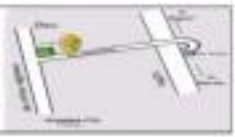

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By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM IS PREpared to lend money for big-ticket infrastructure projects, but parastatals need to approach the pension fund first, according to its president Romulo Neri.

Neri told it in an interview that a pension must also have a sovereign guarantee if the SSS would get involved in the funding.

"This is what is required in the EIA charter," he said. "But we have to be asked first before we can lend."

Neri added that while the SSS has canvassed P123 billion as its share in the other to pump-prime the economy through a P400-billion stimulus package for infrastructure projects, it does not necessarily have to be for one project.

"We can lend in smaller amounts like P1.5 billion or P4.5 billion," he said. "This could be to government-like an NDC bond."

Neri was referring to debt paper issued by National Development Corp., the government's investment arm.

Aside from bill government guarantees—which means that the loan would be paid by the government if the original borrower defaults on its obligations—Neri explained that the SSS chief he also required that a project in which it would invest must have "certain economic rate of the risk and return of the investment."

ONE OF THE BEST SELLING PAPER SHREDDERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Arrogance and open secrets

No Free Lunch
Cielito F. Habito

DOOR BOY HOPKINS AS THE World Bank's country director for the Philippines, he has been demonized as the "arrogant" personification of the Washington-based multilateral lender, which has suddenly become object of the ire of outside flag-waving politicians. The story is, of course, more well-known. After the lending institution's Department of Institutional Integrity (INT) recently elevated to become the Integrity Vice Presidency found evidence of collusion in a major government road improvement project assisted by the lender, it has forced ("debarred") seven construction companies and one individual from participating in bank projects.

Wolfensohn "can't" let his face declined to attend or send representatives to hearings in the latter in both houses of Congress—even in Senate Economic Affairs Committee chair Sen. Mitos Defensor-Santiago had publicly acknowledged the restrictions that representatives of international organizations like the World Bank are subject to. But more than accompaniment in Congress, the World Bank is portrayed as having unfairly maligned the country and its people by its supposedly prejudiate decision—never asked that it was the result of 40 months of investigation that interviewed 60 witnesses in six countries and studied hundreds of documents.

Violations

I will not dwell on the merits or shortcomings of the World Bank's investigation conducted by INT. The fact that the statutory body, the bank's Sanctions Board, decided to debar only seven out of an original 17 companies recommended for sanctions by INT indicates in no that the case not not proven was undertaken in reaching the final decision to debar—including giving the accused the opportunity to respond and defend themselves.

From the available information on the matter, it is clear that the INT investigation and subsequent debarment action by the Sanctions Board were never meant to establish culpability for violations of Philippine laws by any entity or individual. That is clearly beyond the authority of the World Bank. The bank's concern was to establish violations of its own rules governing its projects, any possible violation of Philippine laws was left for the government to determine and address with appropriate actions. Thus, our government was dutifully informed of the results of the investigation through a Referral Report shared confidentially with the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Office of the Ombudsman on the heels in November 2007. The DOF, having neither authority nor resources to conduct its own investigation, reportedly referred the matter promptly to the Ombudsman.

Twist of fortunes

And so, the case inevitably fell on the Office of the Ombudsman, the proper authority in government to act on the case. The question crying out to be asked—and curiously was never asked directly in the heavy fencing fest week—is what the Ombudsman intends to do about the case, particularly a clear timeline for its own investigation and eventual dispositive action. What is apparent is that the Office of the Ombudsman had been aware of the matter for at least 14 months—and yet, inexplicably, only now declares that it has begun acting on the case. What was it doing in the last 14 months, when it could have easily sought additional information from the World Bank with which to conduct its own deliberate investigation, which was incumbent on it to undertake? Surely not for fear investigating other major corruption scandals like the fertilizer scam, the Garchitorena mine scam, the ZTE scandal and a host of other scandalous scandals reeking the present administration—none of which has seen satisfactory closure, yet to mention honest to goodness investigation.

The World Bank has paved the way for the Ombudsman to do her work—and yet, in an ironic twist of fortunes already getting to be commonplace in the Philippine corruption scene, is turning out to be the accused rather than the accuser. In what many are beginning to perceive as orchestrated proceedings, both the House and the Senate, rather than thank the lender for helping expose and curb corruption in the country, have turned their hearings into World Bank-bashing sessions instead.

Credibility gap

The sheer lack of credibility in our government, manifested in these latest moves of the Ombudsman and our lawmakers, to what undermines efforts to curb corruption and shed our image as a most corrupt country in our part of the world at this time, is truly ominous. If the government of India acted quickly last year to work with the World Bank to address findings of their Detailed Implementation Review—not even a bill thrown BJP lawmakers—on the lender under, after finding serious indications of fraud and corruption in five lender projects.

At the rate our officials and politicians are going, we are bound to alienate our most valuable sources of valuable international financing for our urgent development needs, at the worst possible time of tight credit markets and ballooning government deficits. Rather than found Best Business as arrogant, politicians would do well to, in fact, follow his and his predecessors' example of doing sincere development work right on the ground, reaching out widely and listening intently to the voices of civil society and the poor where they are. It seems to me that treating a blind eye to wrongdoing that everyone has considered an "open secret" all these years in the end is arrogance we should all be vehemently protesting.

Comments welcome at chabito@pacific.net.ph.

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Agrarian reform communities to get $100-M funding

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS (BSP) APPROVED THE GOVERNMENT'S plan to tap a $100-million financial assistance (around P4.7 billion) from two foreign lending institutions to finance the second phase of the Agrarian Reform Communities Project.

Of the amount, $75 million will come from the Asian Development Bank while the balance of $30 million will be sourced from the Opec Fund for International Development.

ARCP is a program aimed at reducing poverty in the countryside by helping farmers in agrarian reform communities increase their productivities, such as by investing in infrastructure and providing technical assistance.

The first phase of ARCP completed in 2007, covered 185 agrarian reform communities nationwide. The second phase aims to cover 152 more communities in various provinces across the country.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said only 54 percent of the assistance coming from the ADB would come in the form of a loan. The balance will be the form of a grant.

The loan portion will carry an annual interest rate equivalent to 6-month US dollar Libor plus 20 basis points. The loan is payable over 24 years, inclusive of a six-year grace period.

On the other hand, 25 percent of the assistance from the Opec unit will be in the form of grant. The loan portion will carry an annual interest rate of 2 percent and payable within 20 years, inclusive of a five-year grace period.

ORGD is a fund set up by members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to provide official development assistance to developing countries.

According to a project description posted on the ADB's website, the ARCP seeks to support the government's Medium Term Development Plan.

"[The project aims to substantially expand the production base by helping agrarian reform beneficiaries and other poor farmers in the area to break out of subsistence agriculture and diversify their unfavorable surplus," ADB said.

The funding body also said the project was aimed at improving the quality of produce of farmers, enhancing their skills at distribution, and establishment of rural infrastructure.

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Globe to borrow P12B for expansion this year

By Elisabeth Sanchez-Lacsaye

GLOBE TELECOM INC. IS LOOKING at borrowing as much as P12 billion this year to finance various expansion projects.

Eduardo Gonzalez, Globe investor relations officer, said that for 2009, Globe was planning to raise around P10 billion to P12 billion in new loans and from sources such as the possible offering of retail bonds or facilities from export credit agencies.

The total amount to be borrowed this year already included $500 million from re-entered recently from a foreign bank and a P5- to P6-billion bond offer that started last Feb. 12.

The fundraising is expected to be completed within the first half of the year.

As of Dec. 31, 2008, the company's total debt stood at P481.59 billion.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange last week, Globe said it would issue P3 billion to 5- and 7-year bonds with an oversubscription option of up to P1 billion from Feb. 12 to 19.

Globe's corporate bonds will yield 7.5 percent for the three-year bonds and 8 percent for the five-year bonds.

The three-year bonds will mature in February 2012 while the five-year bonds will fall due in February 2014.

Globe's capital expenditure budget this year of $950 million to $400 million (roughly P36.5 billion at P37 to a dollar) will largely be spent on the consumer broadband business, including 3G as well as its 2G business, both of which account for $280 million of the budget.

3G refers to the third generation of mobile phone standards and technology superseding 2G and is associated with the ability to transfer both voice data like a telephone call and non-voice data such as downloading information, exchanging e-mail, and instant messaging.

Of the total capital expenditures, $70 million will be spent for cable facilities and other support and non-recurring items.

Bulk to go to consumer broadband business

PLDT to buy back 2M shares

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEphone Co. is planning to buy back at least 2 million of its shares from the Philippine and American stock markets this year to preserve the value of the shares amid volatile trades.

"The major governments—India, China, US, UK—are doing their best to stem the tide of recession. It's just a question of time before we see the signs of recovery," PLDT chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan said in an interview at a recent forum.

"We don't discriminate between ADSs (American Depositary Receipts or PLDT shares listed abroad) or PLDT shares. We bought on the 2 and lost interest and there was further collapse/erosion from the listed Peso other 2 (million shares)," he said.

PLDT closed at P2,180 last Friday. It hit a 52-week low of P1,830 this year, data from the Philippine Stock Exchange showed.

In late January last year, PLDT embarked on its first buyback program, buying up to two million shares, or about 1.1 percent of its outstanding common shares. Sources said PLDT was able to buy 1.97 million of its stocks through the first buyback program.

PLDT had said then that the buyback was not expected to affect the stock price because of the small size, but it "does convey the company's confidence in the inherent value of its shares."

In August last year, PLDT announced its second buyback program with authority from the company's board to repurchase up to 2 million shares from new stock market. In December, the company decided to expand its second buyback program by another 1 million shares to a total of up to 3 million shares. Elisabeth Sanchez-Lacsaye

Metro . . .

From page B1

Ahunayen Corp., MPC president Jose Ma. Lim added.

MPC station told the owners to Cardinal Suites when it accepted in August last year a management contract for an interim period of six months. The new agreement will give the group a long-term control of the 212-bed premiere hospital.

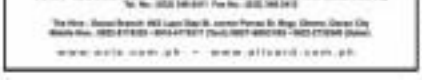
"The terms of the agreement call for us to invest P550 million by the first 10 years of the agreement. Our estimate is we'll spend more than P300 million in the first two years and that's only for equipment upgrade and [construction of] parking building," Pangilinan said.

During the duration of the agreement, Pangilinan said the group would pay outside for operating the assets of the corporation.

"There's a fixed rental and there's a variable rental and we're required to make a certain amount of investments to the hospital in the next 10 years," Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan said the group was required to present a business plan to Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales within the year. He said the first order of the day would be to buy new medical equipment. The commencement of a pending building was a specific request from the cardinal, he said.

Asked whether MPC would increase the hospital's capacity by putting more beds, Pangilinan said that could be part of the new business plan. He said the hospital could also be redesigned so as to relocate the patients' rooms to the area overlooking the Manila Polo Club and Country Club. Boris G. Ilarina



₱460-M CME project OKd

THE BUREAU OF INVESTMENTS (BOI) has approved the registration of a ₱460.8-million coco-methyl ester (CME) project in Quezon province, which should go on stream within the month.

According to project owner Tomasclaveria Inc., the plant will be capable of producing 36 million liters of CME a year, as well as 4 million liters of glycerin, 1.7 million liters of coco fatty acid distillate (CFAD) and 22.08 million kilograms of copra cake.

Glycerin, CFAD and copra cake are all by-products of the CME manufacturing process.

The new facility will use an integrated processing system, the first stage of which involves the conversion of copra to raw coconut oil, with copra cake as the immediate by-product.

The crude coconut oil to be processed from that process will then be refined, producing free-acid oil with CFAD. The free-acid oil will then undergo the esterification process to produce CME.

The P460.8-million project will employ the company's existing business of manufacturing edible coconut oil-based products, including candy, refined, bleached and deodorized coconut oil, as well as fatty shortening or margarine, all marketed under the Elena brand.

The project will create 48 new jobs in a move to its operations within the month.

The Biofuels Act of 2006, requires all diesel-fed vehicles to use a minimum 1-percent biodiesel blend within three months of the effectivity of the law. The rate to 2 percent late Feb. 6, or after two years of the law's implementation.

CME is the biodiesel blend of choice of local firms, although jatropha methyl ester is also under study for possible commercial use. **Abigail L. Ho**

Australia seen blocking RP bananas

BPI says export terms too stringent

By Rizz T. Olchondra

THE BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY HAS expressed concern that the Australian government may still be trying to delay banana exports from the Philippines to Canberra.

Bureau director Joel Rudinas said in a statement that a report on Philippine cavendish bananas by Biosecurity Australia, an agency that provides quarantine assessments and policy advice to protect the Australian agricultural industry, recommended export conditions that "are very stringent, repressive and trade restrictive."

"The measures undertaken by Australia appear to be strategies to delay the commencement of our banana exportation to that country," he said.

He said the proposed measures give no regard to the prevailing growing conditions in the Philippines and the negative consequences to the export fruit quality.

The recommended quarantine measures contained in Biosecurity Australia's Import Risk Analysis (IRA) allow exports only from areas free from moko disease for two years.

The measures also provide the following: fumigant treatment involving methyl bromide Quarantine and Inspection Service inspection being present even in the field and packing houses here in the Philippines, and detailed data and documentation to be presented by the Philippines for consideration by Australia prior to any exports to verify and validate quarantine measures implemented by laboratory and field experiments and commercial trials.

Rudinas also noted that the circumscription limited appeals that could be filed by stakeholders to only two grounds, instead of giving them a chance to comment on whatever aspect of the IRA report they find questionable.

The official said that "would create an obvious harmonious trade relation" between Manila and Canberra.

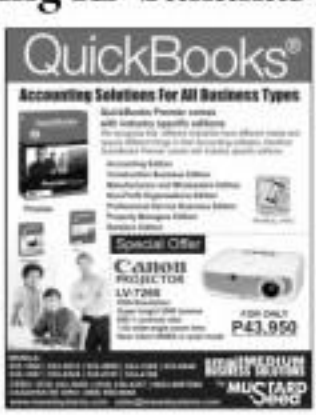
Manila has been seeking access to the Australian market for Philippine bananas since 1995.

But Australia has continuously postponed the issuance of an IRA for banana on the "likeness of exposure," prompting Manila to file a dispute case against Canberra before the World Trade Organization's Dispute Settlement Body in October 2002.

The Australian banana market is estimated to be worth $80 million a year, with production in that country estimated at about 270,000 tons from 14,000 hectares. In comparison, Philippine banana production is around 7.5 million metric tons from about 322,000 hectares of land planted to bananas.

Australian growers, however, have been lobbying against the entry of Philippine bananas into their country, saying they have a right to protect their industry from possible disease and pest outbreaks originating from exporting countries.

Rudinas said the Philippines had completely complied with globally accepted standards to protect its banana exports from pests and diseases.



TVIRD secures term loan

By Abigail L. Ho

TVI RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (TVIRD) (Philippines) Inc., the local arm of Canada's TVI Pacific Inc., has closed a $29.9-million three-year term loan that will finance its mining and processing activities in Zamboanga.

The financing arrangement, entered with UBS AG Stamford Branch Fund Inc. and UBS Asia Special Situations Master Fund Ltd., involves the conversion of existing trade loans worth $27.1 million.

"The loan was interbanked to TVIRD that outstanding conditions precedent under the Jan. 28 omnibus loan and security agreement (Olsa), entered into between TVIRD, the lenders and others, have been satisfied," TVIRD said in a statement posted on the company's official website.

"TVIRD is permitted to convert the bridge facility previously provided by the lenders into a term facility contemplated by the Olsa and to draw additional funds under the term facility," it added.

The Olsa provides for a $29.9-million principal term loan. Following the signing of the Olsa, an additional $1,75,230 in accrued interest was added to the principal, due to the one-week extension in the completion of the conditions precedent.

"On Feb. 6, in connection with TVIRD's fulfillment of conditions precedent to booking under the Olsa, all outstanding amounts that were payable to the lenders under the previous bridge financing facility have been converted into borrowings under the facility," TVIRD said.

The term loan will provide the company with additional working capital for the construction and commissioning activities of its sulphide plant, as well as support mining and processing activities in its Canatuan mine site in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

The loan has a five-year tenor, maturing on Jan. 30, 2014.

Under the Olsa, after 180 days from the date of initial advance, TVIRD is required to start repaying outstanding principal amounts.

Cigarette smuggling costs gov't ₱29B/yr

Tobacco control advocates back proposed new 'sin' tax measure

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT IS LOSING between ₱22.6 billion and ₱29 billion in revenue yearly due to the smuggling and unreported production of cigarettes, according to advocates for tobacco control who are pushing for increased excise on "sin" products.

Maricar Limpin, executive director of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Alliance Philippines (FCAP), said the figures came from the research findings of the Center for Research and Communication Foundation, a nonprofit group affiliated with the University of Asia and the Pacific.

The CRC Foundation presented its study to the House committee on ways and means during a hearing last week on the proposed law to increase the excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco products.

The estimated tax losses were arrived at by comparing Philippine records on importation with export data from source countries, as well as the estimated consumption and data on production, including export and import releases.

"The should prompt legislators to block the efforts of the tobacco industry to stop the passage of a revenue measure," Limpin said.

FCAP said it was supporting efforts of Rep. Lanuginap Victoria Chiu, former internal revenue commissioner, in pushing for higher and single rate taxes on tobacco products.

The group also urged legislators to pass the proposal of the Department of Finance to impose higher taxes on cigarettes across all brands and ensure that these taxes are adjusted to inflation.

Limpin, a medical doctor, said raising cigarette taxes would help the government save billions of pesos in tobacco-related health expenses.

"The Philippines has the most expensive medicines, and yet, it has the cheapest cigarettes in the region," she said.

Citing government data, Limpin said the Philippines has the lowest tax rate among the Southeast Asian countries at 41 percent on inflation-pegged basis.

"In comparison, Singapore imposes a tax rate of 69 percent, while Thailand slaps duties equal to 79 percent of the price per pack of tobacco products," she added.

Between 2003 and 2009, excise taxes on cigarettes were increased from ₱2 to ₱5.45 per pack of low-priced brands; from ₱6.35 to ₱7.14 for mid-priced brands; from ₱10.35 to ₱11.43 for high-priced brands and from ₱25 to ₱27.46 for very high-priced brands.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM REHAB Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (right) and Laoag Mayor Michael N. Fariñas (second from right) inspect the reconstruction of the irrigation canal in Barangay Lataag, Laoag City. The reconstruction is part of the ₱8-million effort to rehabilitate the Laoag-Vintar River Irrigation System, which is scheduled for completion in May this year.

Metrobank drops bid for Philamlife

From page B1

Other banking sources said Metrobank was not able to firm up an agreement with its bancassurance partner, Pacific-based ASA group, on what was originally planned to be a joint bid for Philamlife. Metrobank and ASA were previously keen on joining the building with a 51-49 sharing arrangement favoring Metrobank.

BDO, now the country's biggest bank, will bid for Philamlife in partnership with Generali Philippines.

BDO will have a 40-percent share while Generali will take 60 percent. The portion of Generali will include its parent company Generali Assicurazioni of Italy Bank group and Asiatic Asia Holdings.

The bancassurance partnership that the Ayalas' Bank of the Philippine Islands would team up with British insurance giant Prudential plc, although the sharing arrangement is not known.

Winston Garcia, president of the state-owned Government Service Insurance System, had said that to make it to the shortlist of eligible bidders, an initial offer not lower than P38 billion must be submitted. GSIS had dropped out of the race only as Senator Gavin believed that the estimated book value was too high.

Banker bankers said that as a rule of the thumb, profitable companies put up for sale can fetch a price equivalent to twice the book value.

After selling its consumer finance units bundled into AIG Philam Savings Bank to property magnate Andrew Gotianun's East West Bank for a little over ₱5 billion last month, AIG is selling its remaining Philippine assets as a single block.

Cautious . . .

From page B1

where Sue Miguel has an option to acquire a dominant stake, was up 2.9 percent.

AB Capital Securities analyst Joan Vivian said the market would likely trade sideways this week as there were no strong leads expected. He also noted that mixed signals were seen on the chart of the main index.

"The strength of the market in the midst of all the bad economic and corporate news shows that so much negativity has been priced in already," he said.

Vivian added that the market was now currently trading at a crucial 38-day moving average, which was starting to indicate "oversold."

Doris C. Bonifacio

Money supply may grow by more than 14%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS SAID money supply would likely grow by more than 14 percent this year because of its concessions efforts to inclure additional liquidity.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said latest estimates by the central bank showed there was a probability for money supply to grow faster than 14 percent as early as projected, taking into account the reduction in the reserve requirement imposed on banks.

The BSP reduced late last year the reserve requirement for banks by 2 percentage points, or from 11 to 19 percent of total deposits.

The reserve requirement is among the tools used by the BSP to control the amount of money circulating in the economy. By lowering the reserve requirement, banks will have more funds that could be lent to consumers and businesses. The move is aimed at boosting consumption activity, in view of the global turmoil due to dragging down growth across the globe.

Money supply is usually measured by the BSP in terms of M2, which covers a broad scope that includes currencies in circulation, travelers' checks, check deposits, time deposits, savings accounts, money market deposits, foreign-currency deposits and repurchase agreements.

Guinigundo said the other factor that would boost this year's M3 was the slashing in the BSP's key policy rates. Since December, the BSP has cut its overnight borrowing and lending rates by 100 basis points to 5 and 7 percent, respectively.

The move is in line with efforts to encourage banks to lend more, instead of keeping their funds as deposits to the central bank.

Latest data from the BSP showed that M3 grew by an average of 7.3 percent in January to November last year from year-ago level. In November, year-on-year growth in money supply was recorded at 14.6 percent.

Guinigundo said that even if growth of money supply accelerates to more than 14 percent this year, it would not likely cause inflation to go beyond the target.

If all other factors were held the same, a faster increase in money supply may to accelerate inflation. That is because increases in the amount of money in circulation results to rising demand for goods and services which, in turn, increases higher consumer prices.

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Driving innovation to power the Philippines

Surround system for those who love simplicity

By Charles E. Rubio

FOR THOSE WHO ARE LOOKING for a minimalist yet premium branded home theater system, nothing could be simpler than Bosch's 3-2-1 GS Series II DVD home entertainment system.

With just seven components to set up, the 3-2-1 GS Series II is ideal for novice users or those with limited room space.

Aside from the speakers and a sub-woofer unit (Acoustimass module), you only need to connect three wires and then follow the simple step-by-step instructions stated in the illustrated setup DVD.

"Despite the fact that it's a 2.1-channel system (meaning it has two satellite speakers and a subwoofer), the 3-2-1 GS Series II could deliver cinematic sound that rivals that of traditional five-speaker surround systems," explained Wilson Su, president and GM of Elektra Marketing Corp., which distributes these products in the Philippines.

The software trio has, as explained, four finely-employed specially designed speakers called Genuinwave that can direct sounds to specific areas of the room and at different levels of intensity and timing.

Surrounded by speakers

"The many technologies involved here allow the listener to enjoy the perception of being surrounded by so many speakers, thus transforming TV programs, home movies and even music and radio programs into a spectacular sound experience," said Su.

And with just two visible speakers in front (the Acoustimass module should be hidden away) and a media center (where the AM/FM tuner and the DVD/CD player are located), the room will look less cluttered.

You only have to master the universal remote that lets you go back, select and control devices like the TV and DVD player.

Video upscaling

The 3-2-1 GS Series II is also equipped with a progressive scan as well as an HDMI output, technologies that allow video upscaling possible (up to 1080i).

Video upscaling, by the way, raises the standard of DVDs to near high-definition. While images aren't as impressive as true HD content, the resulting quality is nevertheless better than the usual.

The 3-2-1 GS Series II is also equipped with Videostage 5 decoding circuitry, an audio processor that helps deliver home theater performance even when watching classic movies and TV programs recorded before surround sound speaker systems.

Despite its full complement 999,000 price tag, the 3-2-1 GS Series II is still a good buy for those who don't want too much trouble, or too many speakers, or want minimalist and clean designs to their living room.

HP introduces wireless printer

By Raquel P. Gomez

ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN AROUND FOR some time now, the Bluetooth technology or the wireless exchange of data over short distances from fixed and mobile devices, has been used mainly in headsets or transfers of content from phones to PC.

Another wireless technology, the Wireless 802.11g, usually incorporated in cellular phones and notebooks, is mostly used for accessing Internet content wirelessly in Wi-Fi hotspots.

But have you seen these wireless technologies being used in devices to do mechanical tasks like printing photos or documents?

The world's largest technology company HP has launched a printer, the HP Photosmart Premium Fax All-in-One, that makes possible printing without the wires.

HP Photosmart Premium Fax All-in-One

HP Photosmart Premium is a compact device that incorporates both Wireless 802.11 g Wi-Fi capability and Bluetooth wireless technology to be able to print photos and documents that come from any wireless-enabled devices such as PCs or mobile phones. Aside from wireless connection, this new all-in-one printer also offers traditional connectivity through USB 2.0, Ethernet and CF/SD slots.

According to HP officials, the Photosmart Premium offers an unencumbered 300 feet of coverage area for notebook and mobile device users using the Wireless 802.11g.

For those using Bluetooth in their devices, the wireless printing range is about 30 feet, officials added. Consumers or users who want to print photos straight from their Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones or digital cameras.

Printing speed is 35 Mbps which, according to HP officials, allows quick printing even of larger files.

With the device, multiple users can enjoy shared printing because each computer within the wireless network can connect to this printer at the same time.

HP Photosmart also offers copy, scan and fax functions. Its automated photo function, called the HP Photo Tasks, allows drag and drop printing, reduced paper handling and fewer steps to print. It also features a built-in image editor and OCR software for conversion of scanned documents to editable text. The SRP for this wireless printer is P15,995.

Talk non-stop with new Sony Ericsson speakerphone

WITH THE LONGEST TALK and standby time in the market, the Sony Ericsson Bluetooth Car Speakerphone HCB-108 makes staying in touch with friends, colleagues and family on the move even easier.

This latest car accessory gives one a premium hands-free experience at an affordable price.

It has a sleek Nordic design and can be attached easily to a car visor with no wires, no fuss and no hassle. It can be easily switched between vehicles and can be used in the office as a conference speakerphone.

Talk time is 25 hours, while standby time is up to one month.

It can be attached easily to a car visor

"The new Bluetooth speakerphone HCB-108 is our most affordable car speakerphone in the range, but without compromising on the premium features and superior sound quality that you can expect from Sony Ericsson," said Jacob Jaser, head of the accessories division.

Sow and the Bluetooth™ Car Speakerphone HCB-108 lets one enjoy crystal clear conversations with superior sound quality, digital audio quality with echo reduction, noise cancellation and Digital Signal Processing (DSP).

The speakerphone will be available in selected markets in black and silver. It was showcased at the recent Tech Car Show.

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BUSINESS

Vitamin A-fortified rice may soon hit RP shelves

By Kris T. Ocbondro

THE PHILIPPINES COULD BE the first country to commercialize Vitamin A-fortified rice or golden rice by 2013, according to a non-governmental organization (NGO).

Randy A. Hautea, global coordinator and Southeast Asian director of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), said in a briefing that the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) was now conducting trials.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute is also expected to conduct field testing within the year, he said.

He said that golden rice will have about the same average yield as traditional varieties at "easily 6 tons" a hectare, but harvests may be more consistent because of the country's resistance to disease.

An added benefit is the high Vitamin A content, he said.

Hautea noted that the prospect of consumer indifference was high because Filipinos mostly ate rice more for taste than for its nutritional value.

"Acceptance among Filipinos is found to be high when the technology is explained well," he said, citing the localized values of the crop.

A grownup Golden Rice was developed in 1999 to provide the recommended daily allowance of vitamin A—in the form of beta carotene—to 100-200 grams of rice, which corresponds to the daily rice consumption of children in rice-based societies.

According to the World Health Organization, dietary vitamin A deficiency causes some 250,000 to 500,000 children to go blind each year.

In late 2008, the Bucharest Resolution said it would provide funding to [illegible] Golden Rice through national regulatory approval processes in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Besides golden rice, ISAAA said the scientists are calling for the adoption of more biotech crops to increase productivity and improve the quality of farm products.

"We should adopt [biotechnology] from abroad[;] as we can easily incorporate that in our crops," Hautea said.

Hybrid crops have been reported to increase yields and contain traits due to disease resistance.

To weather recession, RP urged to become 'knowledge economy'

Filipino workforce needs additional training, CEO says

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINES SHOULD WORK ON BECOMING a stronger knowledge economy if it wants to ride out the recession and end up on top of the business process outsourcing (BPO) value chain.

Lauro Vives, president and chief executive of research firm IDG Asia Pacific, said now was the perfect time to "re-skill [the local] workforce and build [its] capacity."

"The structural change in the economy is permanent, meaning the Philippines to be a much stronger knowledge economy," Vives said.

He added that the country should take this window of opportunity to leverage its talent pool in the Visayas and Mindanao, and not just focus on Luzon.

Also, corporate governance in the BPO sector should be improved, to enable the country to maintain its lead in the Asean region, he said.

Local firms were also encouraged to give multinational BPO firms a run for their money and resist companies abroad to get Philippine companies to take over part of their operations.

For his part, Pete Bendo-Gonzalez, chief executive of research and consultancy firm Everest Group, said the country should provide more services, as offshore activities would start to shift to more industry-specific functions.

It would greatly benefit the country if its BPO workforce could be trained to do higher-value functions such as human resources, accounting and procurement, he said.

Management of electronic records—a step up from medical transcription—as well as data processing and insurance claims processing were also other areas that local BPO practitioners could potentially offer.

"But lower value-chain functions, such as voice, will not slow down. This is just new growth we're looking at," he said. "The Philippines should also look at niche functions."

This, he said, would make the Philippines an even more attractive outsourcing and offshoring site.

THERE will still be growth in demand for voice or call center services, but the Philippines has the opportunity to venture into higher-value services in the business process outsourcing sector.

Oil, gas investors air concerns over security

By Amy R. Remo

INVESTORS IN THE UPSTREAM oil and gas sector have urged the government to beef up security to accelerate oil exploration and development activities in the country.

In a meeting, Petroleum Association of the Philippines (PAP) chair Alfredo C. Ramos told National Security Adviser Roilorito Gonzales that investments in the country's oil and gas sector have ended in exploration to its Asean neighbors because of some "hurdles."

"There are many challenges that must be overcome to accelerate exploration activities, among those issues involving security," Ramos stressed.

PAP members requested a number of "rebel attacks" in their exploration areas, most of which are in Palawan.

Ramos asked Gonzales if the oil and gas exploration firms would have to tap private security firms to safeguard their exploration activities or oil installations, like what is being done by Royal Dutch Shell in the Talim Delta region to protect its facilities, which are coveted targets of militant attacks.

In response, Gonzales encouraged the private firms to hire private security groups as the government was focusing on national security.

But at the same time, he also encouraged investors from negotiating with rebels and paying the so-called "board and lodging" fees to kidnappers.

Gonzales added that the security conditions in Palawan and Sulu, where oil and gas exploration is concentrated, was relatively stable "so we encourage you to go on with your exploration programs."

Meanwhile, Ramos also noted that for investments in the upstream oil and gas sector to continue flourishing, "it is crucial that government [will] collaborate with the industry in attracting and sustaining investments in the exploration and development of oil and gas resources in the Philippines."

"Oil exploration and development involves high risk and massive capital requirements," he added, noting that an offshore exploration well in deep water could easily cost about $70 billion, but the success rate is a dismal 10 percent.

'Enabling environment' to grow SMEs sought

LOCAL MICRO, SMALL AND medium enterprises (MSMEs) need an "enabling environment" for them to thrive, and government aside can key to their growth.

Trade Undersecretary Merly Gran said the Department of Trade and Industry was working with the German government, through the GTZ Private Sector Promotion (SPP) Development for Sustainable Employment or SME-DEP) project, to bring together stakeholders at the local government level to develop MSMEs.

"We're now in the process of specifying the program, going beyond Luzon to Visayas and Mindanao. We're trying to encourage the creation of business development service (BDS) providers, to create an enabling environment for MSMEs to grow," she said.

These BDS providers will serve as "suppliers" for MSMEs, providing the services that they need, such as marketing and financial support.

But the government should not be viewed as the "problem solver" all the time, as the private sector also has a role to play to MSME development, said Germany expert Jorg Meyer-Stamer of consulting firm Mesopartner.

"In the past, the government was expected to solve all problems. We have to shift from [being government] being service providers to being a facilitator of markets. That's when you'll get more input from government intervention," he said.

Gran said that now that the national government, local governments play a more direct role in ensuring that MSMEs were nurtured.

"We need to encourage stakeholders to engage in BDS provision. We have to systematize the process so the interplay of business models can be greatly felt. We don't want to encourage MSMEs to depend on subsidies, we want to encourage them to be competitive in the markets," she said. —Abigail L. Ho

BUSINESS Monday
Business Features Editor Margie Quiogue-Espiritu

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Making customers happy the Honda way

By Corrie Salarzon-Mariano

Young GM rallies staff behind principle of customer satisfaction

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The Lanao Lake challenge

WHERE IS "THE SOURCE AND substance of life" said Elizabeth Dowdeswell, former executive director of the United Nations Environmental Programme. Such wouldn't be what it is without water. It certainly is a major resource to us humans. It keeps us alive. We drink, cook and wash ourselves and our stuff with it. Plants and animals need it to live. We use it for recreation, and for maintenance of our daily lives. We travel on and under it. We generate power with it.

And we mindlessly abuse and misuse it to the point where potable and usable water—for consumers, industry and agriculture—has become scarce enough for command, fight and even suit wars to fight over it. We are also altering the environment within which the water cycle operates—earning down whole forests, flooding watersheds, converting the soil into nonabsorbing materials—doubling water runoff, refilling the aquifers, polluting waters bodies—destroying the natural homes for what we call "the good life."

Threatened resource

One of our critical and badly threatened freshwater resources is Lake Lanao, located about 700 meters—about the same as Tagaytay—above sea level right in the center of Lanao del Sur, south of the port city of Iligan in Lanao del Norte. Four rivers feed the lake with the Agus River, flowing southwest into Lanayan Bay as the sole outlet. This river includes the picturesque Maria Cristina Falls. The lake is threatened by our abuse and misuse. It is very important for several reasons.

Its economic import is enormous. Lake waters provide 75 percent of Mindanao's electricity. It provides agricultural, even household, water to major human settlements; at least 15, that border the lake and two municipalities along the Agus River in the neighboring province of Lanao del Norte.

There are about 18,000 hectares of flatland around the lake suited for highland agriculture. Rain exponentially gives income earning potential for this materially impoverished province. The lake itself is 32 kilometers long at its longest point and 20 km wide at its widest point, with average depths of over 60 meters. This expression great freshwater fisheries potential. The lake has a shore length of 115 km.

Properly managed, the lake and its watershed, which also features two smaller lakes of a higher elevation than Lake Lanao on the southern bordering mountains, can provide the fresh water for sustained high rates of agricultural growth and agro-fishery development in the area.

The whole lake basin, around to its outlet state of socio-economic "where the action is." Where applied to the workplace, it means one has to be where the action is to fully understand and properly address concerns on the manufacturing floor or in showrooms and service centers to the soonest possible time.

Quality products, best service

With customer satisfaction at the top of his priorities in HCPC, Hidalgo focused on the continuous improvement of the company's manufacturing and distribution operations.

"My dream is to provide our customers stress-free and the best possible services. No queuing, quick service, flexible check-ups—should be done with in the day," he says.

But with more than 200,000 Honda cars on the road now and only about 30 dealers and service centers around, that dream may be hard to realize.

Thus, he made it his priority to strengthen and expand HCPC's dealership after-sales service network.

"More improvements in the operations of our existing network will ultimately make it very efficient," he says, adding that the improvement might be gradual but it would be continuous.

For faster delivery of services, he says the dealers/service centers will have more efficient processes and better spare parts inventory system. "Easier said for bigger stocks of fast moving parts so that minor repairs and parts replacement orders can be done in the shortest possible time.

Honda Spa

How dealership outlets' full service centers are being put up and some of the existing will be renovated. But while these are being done, Hidalgo introduced the Honda Spa (service, parts and accessories), where minor repairs can be done and parts and accessories can be bought.

The Honda Spa concept aims to lessen the load of the dealers and service centers.

The goal is to put up Honda Spa in areas where there are many Honda owners, which is determined based on HCPC's database.

The first Honda Spa was opened recently in Tandang Sora, Quezon City. At least two more will be opened this year in Metro Manila.

In accordance with Honda, HCPC field representatives are required to visit the dealers and service centers more often to observe their day-to-day operations and determine what are needed to further improve the efficiency of their operations and services.

"The reason is make sure we will be the highest standard of satisfaction, combined with advanced technology experiences," he says.

Manager

Hidalgo is hands-on/doing-some-even-me he is a certified mechanic. He spends at least 12 hours a day in the office from Monday to Saturday. Sometimes he working hours get extended to 14 hours depending on the workload.

He is particular about the organizational culture in the company. Some people in HCPC initially found it difficult to cope with his style after many years of working under a different system. However, as they got used to his style, they realized that Hidalgo's system was working, further improving the efficiency of the company's operations.

"In marketing campaigns, for instance, we do things supported by hard facts and surveys. Our campaigns became more targeted, making us more cost efficient," he concludes, as Honda heads its people.

For every program, she says, there are fallback plans in case in case the original plans does not yield the expected results.

"When a program is being implemented, we do regular updates to determine whether there are differences. If they are not, we immediately go to plan B or C. Through this we save resources and time," the executive adds.

Lighter side

He gets things done. On the lighter side, he motivates. In his first few days in his new post, Hidalgo found out about an HCPC plan to put up a tree museum in the company's compound in Laguna. But only did he support the plan, he also put in a project. Already in working the tree museum will be put up. Now, the tree museum is an integral part of the HCPC complex in San Pedro, Laguna, showcasing the various species of Philippine trees. He also takes an active part in HCPC corporate social responsibility programs, such as its participation in the Bantay Kalikasan program and the barangay recycling efforts.

Still, some think Hidalgo is not and is working too hard but, he says, he will loosen up once when the things he wants to do get done. Besides, he himself admitted how pleasantly influenced his Filipino associates were from the very serious and intense executive he had in India, and everybody knows how courageous the warmth of the Filipino can be.

Making customers happy the Honda way

From page B2

dream of making Honda No. 1 in the Philippine passenger car market doesn't seem far fetched.

Honda culture

He admits though that the vehicle market in the Philippines is quite challenging because it is small, and that the number itself is peculiar in terms of how it succeeds with open in size other vehicle brands that are not as acceptable in other countries.

First on his agenda was to establish the Honda culture among the people in the Philippine subsidiary. This means getting the people in HCPC to believe in themselves and work hard as a team to provide high quality vehicles and services to the customers, he says.

This culture is guided by the so-called Gemba principle. This Japanese word, Shimizu says, means "where the action is." Where applied to the workplace, it means one has to be where the action is to fully understand and properly address concerns on the manufacturing floor or in showrooms and service centers in the soonest possible time.

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MOVEMENTS

Ejap board for 2009 formed

THE ECONOMIC JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION of the Philippines (Ejap) will inaugurate its new set of officers on Feb. 18, 7 p.m. at the Cathedral Palace Magsaysay Bldg., Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City.

The 2009 Ejap Board is composed of: Alena Mae Rivera (president), Lorelei Leclaire (internal vice president), Serena Arboleda (external vice president), Marielle Rivera (secretary), Abigail Ma. Bautista (treasurer), Sarah Lucas (auditor), Suzie Atienza-Lim (director), Jimmy Calapati (director), Iris Gonzales (director), Paul Isa (director) and Chiara Layno (director).

ERC has new official

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION (ERC) has appointed Roderick T. Buncal as the vice chair of the Bid Management Committee (BMC) in place of Cecilio L. Ubarle whose term ended last year.

Buncal was formerly the vice president for system operations of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) and was awarded for excellent operations of the National Power Corp. (Napocor).

He currently serves as the general manager for business development of Kepco Philippines Corp.

ERC cited Buncal's instrumental role in BMC chair until Dec. 31, 2009.

BMC is a nonstock, nonprofit private organization and was set up in 2005 to monitor the implementation of the Philippine Grid Code in compliance to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001.

Bid Code refers to the "set of rules, requirements, procedures and standards established to ensure the safe, reliable, secure and efficient operation, maintenance, and development of the high voltage backbone transmission system and its related facilities."

Tasked to submit reports on grid operations, the BMC also assists the ERC in ensuring "grid security, reliability and an environment conducive to a competitive electricity market for the benefit of the electricity consumers." **Amy E. Rivera**

Ayala new eTelecare chair

ETELECARE GLOBAL SOLUTIONS INC. has named Alfredo Ayala, the chairman of Ayala Corp.'s investment process outsourcing investments, as chair of the company.

In a disclosure, eTelecare said the board elected Ayala as chair to replace Gary Fernandes who had earlier resigned as board member and chair effective Dec. 23.

Ayala is the chief executive officer of Level Solutions Inc., the holding company for Ayala Corporation's investments in the BPO sector.

Last December, Ayala Corp. with Providence Equity Partners completed its buyout offer for all outstanding shares of eTelecare.

The offer expired last Dec. 11 and was made by EEI Acquisitions Co. LLC, an entity jointly owned by affiliates of Ayala and Providence.

As of the expiration of the offer, approximately 18.86 million eTelecare shares and 10.39 million eTelecare American Depository Shares were tendered, which together represented approximately 80.7 percent of eTelecare's outstanding stock.

Ayala has served as a director of eTelecare since February 2008.

Ayala has also served as chair of the board from February 2008 to December 31, 2007.

From February 2004 to March 2008, Ayala also served as CEO of eTelecare. Since June 2000, Ayala has served as CEO of Level Solutions, Inc., a subsidiary of Ayala Corporation, which invests in the business process outsourcing sector.

Ayala has served since May 2006 as a managing director of Ayala Corporation, one of the country's biggest conglomerates with investments in real estate, financial services, automotive, telecommunications, electronics and information technology, water infrastructure development and management, and international operations.

From 1998 to 2004, Ayala served as chair of BPI Technologies, Inc., a business process outsourcing firm in Asia.

Ayala holds a bachelor of arts degree in development studies and economics from Brown University.

He also obtained a master's degree in business administration from the Harvard Business School. **Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson**

Gira appoints CEO

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF Gira Remuneracao Brokers (PR), Inc. has appointed INSB with Jr., Teodoro as President and Chief Executive Officer.

Gira Remuneracao Brokers is one of the top remuneration brokers in the Philippines in terms of premium and brokerage produced and specializes in advising multinational clients as well as commercial and credit risks with reputable and highly rated securities at the Lloyds, European, Asian and American markets.

Presenting: Future Agricultural Scientist

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Reiv has been continually under difficult. His only source of food and subsistence (fruit bearing) life has been pollinated and stressed by man himself. He need Agricultural scientists, who of only crop production animal and plant diseases and pest control methods to nutrition, natural's balance so also can continue sustaining life.

This is why kids like Pablo Miguel Ito Jonas Rilloraza, who at the age of 5, has shown special interest in animals and plants, need to be supported with a good education in order to pursue their dreams. As 5, Miguel has been fascinated by life – talking particular interest in plants and animals and the creatures in general. Recently, his fascination was captured by his image seen be published with the help of his mom – and what a great motivating to see budding early it has enough can.

At a young age, Pablo has been showing signs characteristic of a field learner, and so his parents, took him to a developmental pediatrician who confirmed that he is potentially gifted. However, the Pablo need family support and be having in order to maximize their potentials. A good education plan like Insular Life's I-Excel can help make that happen.

Insular Life's I-Excel Education Plan provides College Education Benefits to fund committed tuition fees. Supplemental Educational Allowance that can be used for books and transportation. Parent/Son Care benefits to get the child started on a career and Insurance protection for the child and his parents to make sure the child continues to get the support he needs. To motivate the child to strive for academic excellence, I-Excel also gives Scholarship Incentive Bonuses to students who graduate Summa or Magna Cum Laude.

Do the potential of your child can be the best he can be through Insular Life's I-Excel Education plan. As for Pablo, he is well on his way to be an Agricultural Scientist!

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INSULAR LIFE I-Excel

With Rivero Wang, 23, Filipino Olympic gold medalist, Wushu Competition at the 2008 Beijing Olympics

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LIFESTYLE Arts & Books

Ilocos Norte gov't saves old schoolhouse from demolition

The provincial board has passed an ordinance to save the American-colonial Laoag school from being destroyed to make way for a mall

RAISER RESPONSE HAS been high regarding the proposed conversion of the American-colonial structure Laoag Central Elementary School into a shopping mall, and the planned demolition of the Spanish-colonial church in Cagde to Dingras, Ilocos Norte.

Ilocos Norte board member Alonzo Abat says a public hearing was conducted on the proposed Provincial Ordinance No. 2009-02-003, "An Ordinance Imposing a Moratorium on the Conversion, Use and Demolition of Buildings, Edifices, Relics, and Other Structures Declared as Part of the Cultural and Historical Heritage Found and Situated within Ilocos Norte." It was conducted with the provincial board's committee on laws and resolutions Feb. 6.

Irish Montero of the Heritage Conservation Society and Ioanna Philippsen were to Abat: "Congratulations on a very successful public hearing! I was elated by the news that the attendance was astounding...the session hall was packed to the rafters and could not accommodate all those who came, so another room had to be opened to allow people to listen. It's heartwarming to learn this issue has generated so much interest among the local community of Laoag. Heritage is, indeed, in the consciousness!"

It was argued the building was not a heritage building because it did not appear in the DepEd's census of Gabaldon-type schools dating from the American colonial period.

But architect Reynaldo Ilarmo of the National Historical Institute debunked the argument, stating the structure was clearly of the Gabaldon type and definitely a heritage structure built during the American colonial period.

Moreover, generations of graduates, numbering in the thousands, share the school's heritage, adding a wealth of intangible value to the structure and its surroundings.

It was also argued that since the school stood on church properties, due to church-state separation, its future was not an issue from civil and canon interventions, a claim soon heard by the voices of the 2,000 who demanded that their school remain.

The National Historical Institute's certifi-

A4/COLUMN 1

VISUAL ARTS

Ortigas Foundation Week

Book, art and music lovers are invited to the Ortigas Foundation, Inc. (ORI) center's celebration its 30th anniversary, Oct. 29-31.

"Booked at the Ortigas Park" showcases great titles from noted publishing houses and bookstores. The 30 guest Quezon City-Typhoon Silent Takes the stage and serenades with classics of Filipino poems and other pop hits.

Kids of all ages are invited to go to the Ortigas Park on Feb. 31, 2-4 p.m., for Bachelor ng Kidditan's live illustration showcase. Sign up and prodigal hours of volunteer work at the Ortigas Foundation's Arts Book of the Ortigas Building, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. For more information, call 6357 0331 to 38, locals 333 and 338, or e-mail ortigasfoundation@ortigas.com.ph.

"LYRICS for Naked Frontiers," by Manolo Pueblos, and "Pandanonna Collection," by Nonoi B. Farol

Farol, Pueblos at Artisterval

Nonoi B. Farol and Manny Pueblos hold "Artisterval Exposition" at Artisterval at 333 Commercial St., Greenhills East, Mandaluyong. (3 Farol exhibits his new nail-glass and bomb-salted steel ceramic-like reinterpretations of archeology and sculpture." Pueblos explores the potentials of natural and modified stone in his search for sculptural purity. Call 7238818.

"UNTITLED #xxx%," by Pudding Arnaiz

Arnaiz, De las Reyes at Magnet

Pudding Arnaiz's "Up Loved Hair!" is running till March 6 at Magnet Gallery: Katipunan at 205 Aguo Avenue, Novaliches, Quezon City. Laurie Knights, QC. In a compiled pen-on-tracing paper, the artist reveals gaps the "backward symbolisms of tattoo and heart." Meanwhile, Lara de las Reyes's "Tired Tears in a Lonely Hunter" is also running at Magnet. The artist's "Tired" is a collection portraits of this artists' most intended" or in-action people. Call 8782191.

ARTWORK by Lara de las Reyes

Kaisa at Silverlens

Silverlens Gallery at 2/F, YMC Bldg. 3-2329 Paseng Tuna Ext., Makati, presents "Family Systems," by 120-based photographer Shiba Kaisa, until Feb. 7. The exhibit features a series of photographs of her immediate family members' homes all over the world. Each home is a glimpse of their extraordinariness through objects of the everyday. Phone: Call 8190044 or 8890-0000 ©.

"PUTING Bola," by Buenaventura Balandan

60 artists at Kaida

Kaida Gallery at GFO Bldg., 123 Buencamino St., QC, marks its second anniversary with "1456," an exhibit by 60 artists, Feb. 25-March 6. The show features works by Soc Villon, Al Galasinao, Ramon Orlina, Elmer Borlongan, Eugene Jacquet, Gerard Lledo, Gloria Feliciano, Juanito Torres, Mac Balderas and others. Call 4144777 or e-mail info@kaidagallery.com.

"Cloud Nine" at Greenhills

"Cloud Nine" a group show, runs until Feb. 28 at SF Jewellery, Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan. Participating artist are Joe Evangelista, Dennis Baron, Anna Dengel, Noche Briones, Raul Bravo Jr. (SF), Salvador Ching, Jojo Kastro (LAS), Sam Penson (WP), and Randi Ebcasay.

ARTIST Tan Asuncion was recently in Hamacon for an international artists' meeting. While there, he met with Philippine consul general Jerry Pagdanganan. With Asuncion (second from right) are Betina Asuncion, Mary Bernice S. Asuncion, Jerry Pagdanganan and Pia Pagdanganan.

'Looking for Juan' exhibit opens su

FAÇADE of "The Ashmonians"

IN THE HEART OF LINDALE LA JOLLA IN San Diego, California, is a private movie set called The Ashmonians, where "Looking for Juan, a Collection of Contemporary Art from Filipino Artists From the Philippines" was displayed.

Works by Daniel Alegre, Anthony Bales, Michael Cacnio, Anthony Farrales, Jennifer Trinkle, Agang Magnaba, Raul Dimson, Bill Ikolo Villanueva Jr., Pinky del Rosario and Ben Medina were featured in the two-storey, intellectual architecture while giving audiences riveting glimpses of how the Filipino's psyche, culture, passions and idiosyncrasies.

The fund-raising show's six-month opening in January was attended by over 2000 patrons and the works were on view until Feb. 14.

Noteworthies were welcomed to the exhibit, which was organized by The Archetypium, the Philippine-based Center for Art, New Museums and Sustainable Development (Canvas), American artist Jim Richardson and Filipino artist Ben Cabrera.

'Green Light' exhibit-auction running at Met

THE ART EXHIBIT-AUCTION "GREEN LIGHT" seeks to raise money to support some 10,000 scholars in 17 Christian Brothers schools all over the country.

"Green Light," which runs thru Feb. 23, 6 p.m. Among the featured artists are Adelina Alea, Marivic Ray Asuncion, Federico Aguilar Alcuaz, Amorsolo Araiza, Tom Aranda, Manuel Baldemor, Karina Bolinao, Amador Bucquilla, Jovan Bulalo, Glenn Cagandahan, Daniel de la Cruz, Arnulfo Dans, Jonathan Empuno, Jomar Dubbia, Joel Ayes, Arturo Luz, Carlo Magno, Henry Dakona, Ramon Orlina, Mario Parial, Alma Quinto, Ronnie Quizon, Dominic Rubio, Jerrod Santoso, Jeremiah Soriao, Judy Gloppen, Edwin Tiro Reyes and Lydia Velasco.

In her exhibition notes, curator May Rose Lo says: "In this first 'Green Light' series presentation there's residents of the visible world to interface light, from manifold angles and lines of sight. Some works remain faithful to the real, while many more deconstruct to figure and narrate—the Muslim and Child, landscapes, children, and everyday life. Some works abandon the figure altogether, while still others abstract from and hide as it through hazed, edged geometric lines, pastoral and historical abstraction, surfaced and manufactured perspectives, soft tones and impressionist hues. Some works are playful and rationalized, others are enigmatic and acrimonious-like, conceptual and narrative.

"Green Light' at the Met also walks us through a room that showcases a spectrum of artistic practices by some of the best self-taught, others more apprenticed in museum, some of whom are only tedious or a work away

CLOCKWISE from top: artwork by Federico Aguilar Alcuaz; "Mother and Child," by José Joya; and "Celebration of Family," 1981, by Romeo Orbeta

A number of these artists hold formal Fine Arts degrees, with others from out of art school. While some artists are associated with groups (Antifresh, art Association of the Philippines, Dimensyong Group, Saturday Group), each has his own personal way of modeling, light, color, texture and other basic elements that, when put together impressively and consistently, can remind us in countless imaginative ways of all those things that make us truly human."

The Metropolitan Museum is at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Malate, Manila. Call 6017 8083/103, 7229833 or 725 3333.

'I Love You Because' from Repertory

REPERTORY PHILIPPINE OPEN offering, "I Love You Because" (1981), a Filipino version of the Broadway musical retelling of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice."

With lyrics by Ryan Cayabyab and music by Joshua Santos, 1981 is a delightful story about four individuals—not-so-people who find love in people and places they least expect.

The young cast includes Harold Cruz, Cuba Borromeo, Kyla Rosca, Cathi Intano, Anne Simonetta and Orly Torres.

Rep veteran Bobbie Guevara directs the musical, while Francis Mathew choreographs. With charts set into balance for set design, Glenn Torres for lights, Orly Torres as vocal coach, and Aga Mulach as musical director and repetiteur.

RAR is a show about taking chances, breaking stereotypes, falling head over heels in love, and peeling away the façade and hair-raise illusions that distract us from seeing what—or who—is really before us.

In a song in the musical goes, "It's easy to say 'I love you, anyway' But I don't. I love you because."

RAR will be staged all weekends, Feb. 13-March 8, with 8½ day and Monday shows at 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:30 p.m.

For ticket inquiries and reservations, call Tinsworld at 8918999 or the Rep office at 8836730. Visit www.repertory.ph or www.ticketworld.com.ph.

Ilocos Norte gov't saves old schoolhouse from demolition

From page C1

cation that the historic value of the school merited conservation gave strong reinforcement to the preservation demands of local citizens.

Gov. Michael Bind held a press conference later and announced the passage of "the ordinance that will precipitate the 1918 [National Historical Institute] and historical measures in declaring the Laoag Central Elementary School as historical landmark and structure will block the demolition of the school and block the mall."

Bits passed and enacted, Ordinance 2009-03-003, which recognizes the value of heritage within the province, defining what structures are considered heritage or structures designed their status of being publicly or privately for Church's sound, and providing for the preservation of these structures to the benefit of future generations, it is landmark heritage legislation in the Philippines.

The Ilocos Norte supported the ordinance by assembling the public hearings showed public concern for heritage. Thank you to the people of Ilocos Norte and all the provincial officials of Ilocos Norte.

Dingras

The pinwood demolitions of the Dingras Church façade has also elicited high reader feedback.

HEADLESS Santiago Matamoros sculpture at San Agustin Museum at right is the headless in old photograph. The headless bone makes.

"Can I use the outside to raise the awareness of the people?" a reader wrote. "My room are from Paoay, Ilocos Norte, and I don't wish Dingras Church to suffer what was done in St. Anne Church in Paoay, where the old façade was destroyed and a new one built."

Another respondent e-mailed: "I'm saddened . . . Whatever it takes, that façade must be preserved and restored.

"I saw the leaning façade of St. Peter and Paul in Macau and it was truly breathtaking," the letter writer continued. "Sun And de Dingras has the same magnificence. I visited the church early '70s as a young student, during a travel that enriched my knowledge of our beloved country.

"The people of Ilocos must band together in preserve this iconic structure. It will be a crime to remove this façade. Our architects in the 17th century put this church together and it is shameful if our current architects and engineers cannot put this structure back and shore it structurally for the coming generations to enjoy."

The writer asked authorities: "Please, do not touch this structure. Please study all options."

"I am shocked," wrote another reader who hails from Dingras.

"Thank you for your alert. What is our heritage money going to do about it? What is mayor Domingo, WHO didn't going to church? Somebody should file a TRO! This is what we did when Bayani (Fernando) wanted to remove the trees on the island forming Garitao along Kalaanan's avenue (Quezon City). Until now the avenue are still there.

"I am writing my parish priest and the bishops of Ilocos Norte today."

Shadow icon

The 19th-century wooden head of San Jacinto Matamoros was stolen from the Museo de San Agustin Church in Intramuros, Manila. The theft occurred Sept. 18, 2008, but was only reported to the Intramuros Administration in January 2009.

The head measures 29 x 25 cm (6.6 cm) and polychromic. Anyone with information about the antique piece can call Anna Gutierrez (527-9864) or Armando Arroyo (527-3302).

E-mail jmin.pinoy@gmail.com

uccessfully in California

FABLEY on Rosario's work subtexts. Ornery Adam/ Amorsolo by Anthony Fermin, Agang Magsaka and Daniel Alipon greet viewers at exhibit circle. Below: Photo by Bernardo Aragon, Philippine consul general, welcomes crowd to exhibit.

...ell, and Pacific Rim Park Project, a San ...-based nonprofit organization that ...s to build Friendship Parks throughout ...Pacific Rim.

...ur exhibition was also funded in part by ... from the City of San Diego Commis... for Arts and Culture and the County of ...Diego.

...ounds shall benefit the next park, which ...be built in Puerto Princesa, Palawan.

Pacific Rim Friendship Parks are designed and built by architecture and art students who come together from several countries to transcend differences in culture and language by sharing their vision as they work to complete the park in 30 days. The park is gifted to citizens of the Pacific and to the sponsoring organization or institution in the host city.

The trans-Pacific crossing of the Filipino artists' pieces thus echoes the Pacific Rim Park aim of bridging cultures, establishing new connections, and helping define what it means to be a member of the emergent Pacific Rim community.

A consolidated effort of Canvas, Ust Gallery and Artery Manila brought the artists together for a simultaneous Manila showcase of artworks also up for grabs to support the Pacific Rim Park vision. The show was held at Ust Gallery in Sarrabia.

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Art and poetry of loss and grief

By Patricia A. Tarriman
Contributor

MANDUE SUPINO MOUNTS HER 17TH solo art exhibit at the Manila Peninsula on Feb. 23.

It consists of new works done in the last two years as well as earlier works, which should give art connoisseurs an idea how she has evolved... from the earlier dreamlocal and impressionist mold of her "Dreamscapes" to their current abstraction.

Of the new works, Mandue said they were done over a "period of loss, pain and healing" over her husband, Central Bank governor Rafael Buenaventura, who died of cancer.

"The loss of Diong, who was my most avid art supporter, affected my creative output," she said. "I had an artist's block for a long, long time. But I had to transform this pain into something positive."

She immersed herself in Red Cross work and painting for St. Mary's House for Girls in Tagaytay and Sarm's Center for Gifted Young.

She also forged an artistic collaboration with poet Rio Alma (National Artist for Literature Virgilio Almario). Together, they did "Remorse," which marries poetry and painting.

Almario's poetry is translated into evocative English by award-winning poet Marner Kilates. The book will be launched during the exhibit's inauguration.

In the book's introduction, curator Ruben D.E. Dolor said each "of the 75-26 poems and 26 paintings is empowered to confront an image, reflect on nature, poetic emotions, or, in its most audacious, encounter into the unknown, what Horace admits as 'the equal right of painters and poets to liberty of imagination.'"

Mandue's love is shown in her "Autumn Symphony" and distilled in Almario's short poem, "Tagaytay" (Plum):

Mistulad kang hamuhas
Ang sakong tahimik
At ang mga dahong tuyot
Ay may sumpong upos
Kilates' translation:
The sound of rain is rough
When it spreads pouring
And dry leaves carry
The scent of salt

Equally evocative is Rio's "Sa Mutabon ng Tagaytay," matched by Rubio's "Storm Dream" (:

Naglalalig ng luoras,
Umaawang ang hanibik;
Nagngalit sa amin
Ang pantig ng kuntig
At nanalamid by Kilates:
As the roots widen
The tensions worsen;
The pillow is stained
By the memory of dew

Visual poetry

"I've always loved poetry, kaiko in particular," she said. "I used to write poetry but got hooked on painting. Of course, it is plain to see that painting is visual poetry. I paint poems and write paintings, too. That's what many of my friends say."

She is happy with the modest highlights of her artistic life, such as the exhibitions held at the Chinese Room in Paris (one of her Chinese horse paintings is part of the sets collection) and in San Francisco; the 13 outdoor murals she painted for her late husband; and the 2005 exhibit at the Peninsula in which her grandson Bryan, 8 years old at the time, interacted with her.

"I see at this stage of unfolding and evolving as an individual and as an artist," she said. "I like to think I am becoming more spontaneous with my brushstroke and my colors. On the other hand, I have simplified my life and my paintings are distillations of my romance with nature. It's a new life, my renaissance. After all the turmoil and grief, there is a new spring."

"Remorse" opens Feb. 23, 6 p.m., at Hidden's *Hilot of the Worlds* Peninsula. Curator of honor are National Artist Arturo Luz and Napoleon V. Abueva. Call 8179574 or 8184978 or e-mail remorse@hotmail.com.

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Hablo at Avellana

ALLAN HABLO'S "MONSTEROUS 3" consists of 25 mixed-media monochrome paintings.

Though known for his figurative works, Hablo uses abstraction as therapy.

Hailing from Bulla, Hablo uses rudimentary materials such as soil and glue, along with paint, in his artworks. The process he employs is a tedious one, strenuous on the body (as his paintings are often large) yet, ironically, soothing to the mind.

From the contemplative nature of his works emanates a sense of poetry where the appropriation of elements is handled with careful purpose—there is nothing wasted or purely accidental in Hablo's art. Only the steady presence of himself.

"Monsterous 3" runs until Feb. 28, Avellana at 2650 Fil Harrison St., Pasay City. Call 8550837, e-mail avellana_gallery@yahoo.com. Gallery hours are 10 a.m.–7 p.m., Monday-Saturday.

SUNDOG artist Allan Hablo

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World-class Pinay talent shows 'em

By Gerry Plaza

JEANNA Ampil and guest Franco Laurel.

SHOW Director Carlo Orosa was right. Local fans of Filipina singer Jeanna Ampil, international theater star, saved thousands of dollars in plane fare and still experienced a world-class performance.

During her Valentine show, "Jeanna Ampil ... I Love," at the Music Museum on Feb. 13,

Ampil enchanted the audience with music from her early years on "Miss Saigon" to her most current (and ongoing) portrayal in "Avenue Q".

Her combined powerful vocals, a projection honed in professional theater, flawless diction and raw emotion to give listeners undeniable proof that Filipino artists only have what it takes.

Ampil outdoored a spate yet another

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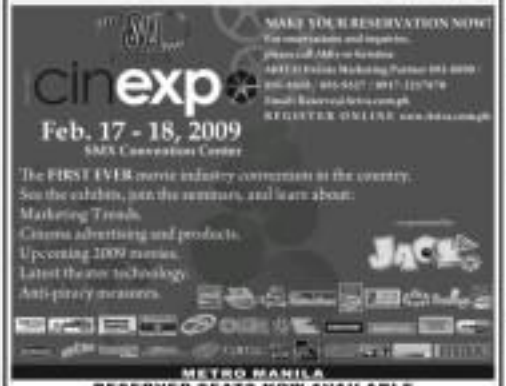

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1 SEVEN POUNDS	6 PINK PANTHER 2
2 VALKYRIE	7 MY BLOODY VALENTINE
3 UNDERWORLD 3	8 QUEERCIDITY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL
4 PUSH	9 MARLEY & ME
5 WHEN I MET YOU	10 INKHEART

ERMITA

1 SEVEN POUNDS	
2 PINK PANTHER 2	6 MARLEY & ME
3 VALKYRIE	7 UNDERWORLD 3
4 PUSH	8 INKHEART
5 WHEN I MET YOU	9 MY BLOODY VALENTINE

METRO EAST

1 PUSH	5 MARLEY & ME
2 VALKYRIE	6 UNDERWORLD 3
3 WHEN I MET YOU	7 INKHEART
4 PINK PANTHER 2	8 MY BLOODY VALENTINE (WHEN I MET YOU)

NOVALICHES

1 BUTAS	4 WHEN I MET YOU
2 VALKYRIE	
3 PINK PANTHER 2	

PIONEER

1 PINK PANTHER 2	3 WHEN I MET YOU
2 VALKYRIE	4 PUSH

STA. ROSA

1 VALKYRIE	4 WHEN I MET YOU
2 PINK PANTHER 2	5 THE ABANDONED
3 THE HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY	6 BRIDE WARS

LIPA

1 UNDERWORLD 3	4 BRIDE WARS
2 WHEN I MET YOU	
3 THE ABANDONED	

DASMARIÑAS

1 THE HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY	3 VALKYRIE
2 WHEN I MET YOU	4 PINK PANTHER 2

IMUS

1 THE HAUNTING OF MOLLY HARTLEY	3 WHEN I MET YOU
2 VALKYRIE	4 PINK PANTHER 2

ANGELES

1 VALKYRIE	3 THE ABANDONED
2 WHEN I MET YOU	4 PINK PANTHER 2

STARMILLS

1 INKHEART	4 PINK PANTHER 2
2 WHEN I MET YOU	5 UNDERWORLD 3
3 TRANSPORTER 3	6 VALKYRIE

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1 UNDERWORLD 3	5 YES MAN
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Child of RP movies packs up

Berting Labra was hailed by 'Da King' as the greatest Filipino actor of all time

By Raquel San Diego Jr.

HE WAS CALLED the "Mickey Rooney and Bobby Breen of the Philippines," the Pinoy version of Hollywood Child Wonders in the 1940s.

For the late Anton King Bertomeu de Dra A., Bertig Labra was "the greatest Filipino actor of all time"—equally adept in comedy and drama, in action flicks and musicals.

"He was a child of the movies," said Boots Anson-Roa, head of Movie Workers' Welfare Foundation (Mowelfund), of which Labra was a beneficiary.

According to the film web site IMDB, Labra, who surrendered to complications on Tuesday morning, appeared in 112 movies and TV shows—several of which centered the two Pares of local cinema, Fernando Jr. and FPJ.

Discovered

Born April 17, 1933, Labra as child star danced the scene with the elder Pare in several hits, including "Huling ng Talibon," "Ungol," "Kuntil Boy" and "Alimuka."

In one of his last interviews, he told the Inquirer in 2003 that the elder Pare once bit dolo-dolo.

"We were looking for a boy who could sing," Labra recalled. "He remembered me from Empire Reboot's stage shows during the Japanese occupation."

(We were only 6 when he made his dapo debut. At that tender age, he also witnessed the murder of his father, Francisco Labra, former bantamweight and featherweight champion of the Orient, in the hands of Japanese soldiers. "He was tortured," he told the Inquirer. "His hands were bound with barbed wire.")

The elder Pare became the 11-year-old's surrogate father. "He was a man of his words," related Labra. "But he was an Ayrshade. He often treated me to lunch in Quiapo."

Last reunion

Five years after the elder Pare's death, Labra, then a teenager, teamed up with FPJ in the 1956 boxoffice hit "Lo' Waist Gang," a film that spawned a string of sequels and a lifelong friendship with Da King.

The younger Pare's daughter, Maria Grace Limcaoco, recalled that the remaining members of the "Lo' Waist Gang," along with family and friends, gathered at the Grace Memorial Park in Greenhills last month for what turned out to be a final reunion.

"The Bertig was there, with Tony Cassman Butch Bautista, my mom (Susan Revuo) and Manny Mha Mon-Perez," Limcaoco recalled. "There's only a few of them left. Bertig let us get together that night."

In the 2003 Inquirer interview, Labra recounted, with more than a tinge of pride, that he was instrumental in the courtship and eventual marriage of Limcaoco's popular movie-star parents.

"He met in the 1970s," Limcaoco recounted. "We worked in many TV shows and movies together. We became close because his loved telling stories between takes."

Amazing life

Indeed, Labra, who experienced amazing highs and devastating lows in the rollercoaster life, had plenty of stories to share.

In 1990, his last fullfilm action role Tubo Terrorista, was aired for months. Labra spent 23 years in Muntinlupa, only to be exonerated by the Supreme Court. He has been an Inhuman in spite of the imprisonment and the damage it caused to his family life.

He left the Department in 2000. "In prison, I felt God's presence in my life and saw things clearly."

Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., who co-starred with Labra in the 1991 action film "Hinoog Gang," remembered Labra as "a natural comic who quickly turned serious in front of the camera. He was well respected and will be missed by industry colleagues."

Revilla's father, actor-pol Ramon Revilla Sr., also worked with Labra on the big screen. Said the younger Revilla: "The Bertig was a simple and down-to-earth, humble person like those guys who preceded him. Mowelfund and the Actors' Guild should be strengthened, so these organizations could continue helping marginalized movie workers."

Labra was buried in the Garden of Memories memorial park in Fairview yesterday.

BERTING Labra. He loved telling stories.

POWER PLANT CINEMA

PUSH
12:00, 2:00, 5:00
7:00, 10:00

PINK PANTHER 2
12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00
8:00, 10:00

VALKYRIE - PG13
12:15, 2:45, 5:15
7:45, 10:15

QUIET - "KOMIK HOLIDAY"
1:00, 3:40, 7:00, 9:00

"KOMIK & BARON"
1:00, 3:40, 7:00, 9:00

SEVEN POUNDS - PG13
12:20, 2:50, 5:20
7:50, 10:20

VALKYRIE - PG13
12:45, 3:15, 5:45
7:45, 10:15

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1) VALKYRIE PG-13
2) PINK PANTHER 2 (2D) 12:45, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45
3) PUSH PG-13 1:20, 4:00, 6:30, 9:30
4) WHEN I MET YOU (2D) 2:15, 4:45, 7:15, 9:40
MARLEY & ME PG-13 1:05, 3:40, 6:15, 9:00

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Feb 21: West Concourse, UA Alabang, Festival Supermall

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1:45, 4:45, 7:30, 10:15
PG-13
PINK PANTHER 2
1:45, 3:30, 5:15, 7:15, 10:45
2D
PUSH
2:30, 8:30
PG-13
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PG-13
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PROMENADE
1 WHEN I MET YOU 2:15, 4:45, 7:15, 9:40
2 MARLEY & ME 1:05, 3:40, 6:15, 9:00
3 PUSH 1:20, 4:00, 6:30, 9:30
4 PINK PANTHER 2 12:45, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45
5 VALKYRIE 1:00, 3:45, 6:45, 9:15
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AYALA CENTER CEBU
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February 14, March 31

MARKET! MARKET!
Show
February 20-22, Central Plaza

BONIFACIO HIGH STREET
Philippine Jazz Festival
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Tai Nang

World-class Pinay . . .

From page D1

crowd with Broadway music was especially emotional and sets. "I have no character in hide in [tonight's]," she said. "I'm naked in front of you."

She appeared nervous in the early part of the show—a bit tentative as she rendered "Someday's Coming" and "Tonight" from "West Side Story," the standard that she headlined recently, and "Seasons of Love" from "Rent." But she upped the ante in her "Miss Saigon," starring in "Made in My Mind," "Sun and Moon," and "I Still Believe". The audience was stone-cold.

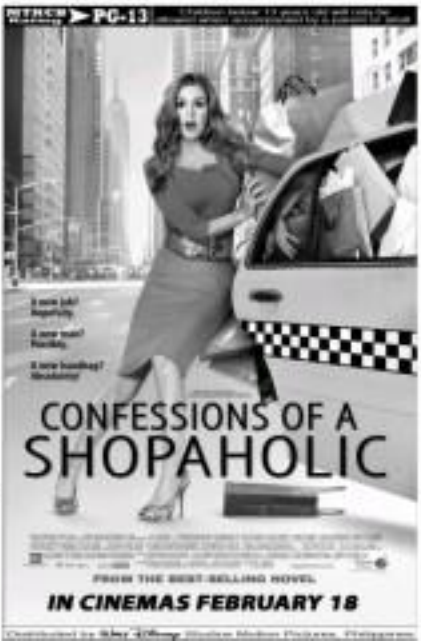
Years of obvious hard work yielded equally impressive takes on "Oh My Own" from "Phantom of the Opera" and "I Don't Know How To Love Him" from Jesus Christ Superstar".

Arnaiz's shell-to-GMO sets seamless. She took on "Maup ka Dito" and "Morning Reflection" with authority and just the right amount of playfulness. She was caught up almost giddy to her draw with Franco Laurel, another theater pro, who was also a revelation in their evening.

Highlights of the evening was Arnaiz's medley of hits from "Sunset Blvd", "Wicked" and "Dreamgirls". Some spectators were convinced they were hearing versions better than the originals.

Should this world-class Pinay talent decide to stay (she's now based in Los Angeles), we'll all be the better for it.

Watch a video report of the concert at http://www.inquirer.net/ode



Gabby . . .

From page D1

into a big lounge with cool DJs.

I teased Alfred, "Where's your girlfriend?" He replied, "I miss her. She's in Italy studying art. She's half-Italian."

I nodded him, "Upper or lower half?" Alfred laughed out loud. "Wow, both arms (that's why we chit. It's tough having a long distance relationship but it makes every reunion sweeter."

Does he believe security is more important than love in a relationship just like his character OC's sick and domineering BFF in "When I Met You"? "Nope. My heart overrules my head when I'm in love."

Here's that for a Valentine of technology!

New telenovela

"Crazy Stars," penned by Ricardo Sing Carlo J. Caparas, will be transformed into a telenovela by GMA-7 featuring Eddie Garcia, Robin Padilla, Manny Pacquiao and Regine Velasquez. Coach Carlo said the action-packed epic will have foreign OFWfighters as stars, including Judico's have called Carlo J. the 2007 Presidential Medal of Merit awardee for "King of Telenovelas" owing to his airing of hits "Pag Ibinalik," "Dahil Sa Pag-ibig," "Sa Kabuwang Hanggat sa Aking Tadyang," to name a few. "Stacy Baby" is another feather in Caparas' cap!

Model search

World Fashion Channel Asia has launched the World Fashion Model Years of Asia at the Bed's Embassy Fly. It has assured the country for models worthy of representing the World Fashion brand.

Enlisting on keeping the Philippine Fashion purely Pinoy, WFC made sure all models were of Filipino descent. It continues in search for male and female model every Saturday.

WFC will display 30 percent local fashion content mixed with 50 percent international content. It will broadcast local content for the following shows: "On the Dark Carpet," "Mandom of Fashion," "Portfolio," "Fashion Inside," "Current Trends," "Photo Secrets," "Stories," "Fashion Police," "Fashion and Luxury." Live in viste Indonesia!

Local starting hahahangerfashion hasan

GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

A. LIPAN — By JOE ABEDA

PUGAD BABOY — BY PH. JUNIOR

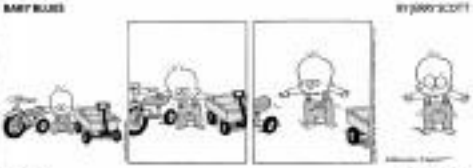
DICK TRACY

LOVEHKNOTS — BY ELIZABETH CHOONGCO

JAMES BOND

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN PABALINAS

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT



ATOMO AND WEBBY — BY LYRA GARCIA-LANO

RUGRATS

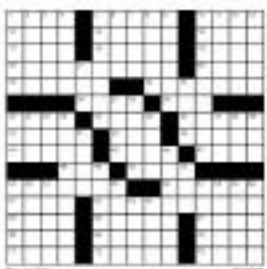
RIKO MACHINE — BY MARK ABEDA

BEN — By DAVID, SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Hasta luego
5 Shakespeare, e.g.
10 Place at an expo
14 Reflexively
15 Dry, deeply?
16 Satan's domain
17 Bullring favorite
18 Many boxers
19 Made 1 avg.
20 Material fastening "Wanted" posters
22 Sit-in cohort
24 Numerical
24 Feeling an ingrown toenail
26 Czech capital
28 Drop suddenly?
30 Beach finds
31 Bridge position
32 Eye part
33 ___ this (Expressionist)
35 Pianist Blaine
36 Hound dog
40 Sensation
41 Bruises
47 Sick
48 Spread random
50 Passport stamp
52 Sour tastes
54 Tear gang
55 Shoelace
56 Navigation system
58 Assassinates
60 Completely absorb
61 Apple and walking partner
62 Bridge (Hathaway)
63 Make secure
64 Lost traction
65 Started shopping
66 Gun loosely
67 Backsticks

DOWN
1 Dust bath
2 Mexican cookie
3 Actor Cabot
4 Mr. T's outfit
5 Pastime's past
6 Opponent's kick
7 Bee-bopper
8 Bee thought
9 Pillow stuffing
10 Marketing
11 Pecos town
12 Ignite
13 Hawaiian island
21 Ship of fools
23 Irritant
25 Mexican dance
27 Theater section
29 Hot tub
31 Dance center
33 Ruby and Garnet
34 Vodka
37 Fish-eyed
38 Russian city on the Volga
39 Hawaiian island
42 Ship of fools
43 Irritant
45 Mexican dance
46 Theater section
49 Hot tub
51 Dance center
53 Ruby and Garnet
54 Vodka
57 Fish-eyed
59 Russian city on the Volga



By Jo Ella
Ocala City, FL

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

FEBRUARY 16, 2009

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Mercury is full of its quick-moving self. Just be careful that you don't overdo it. Don't overspend, overeat, overdrink or overdress. You've been overgenerous and lost in the heart department. You think it's taught a painful lesson. But they just don't know what you're talking about. Overjoyed, overjoyed, overjoyed.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Mercury is in your sign, and you're full of ideas. Some of them are good, some are bad, and some are downright dangerous. Be careful which is which. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize! Get out and socialize!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

ARIES (March 21 to April 20): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

TAURUS (April 21 to May 21): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

GEMINI (May 22 to June 21): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

CANCER (June 22 to July 22): Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't be afraid to say yes. Don't be afraid to say maybe. Don't be afraid to say anything at all.

DAILY SUDOKU

Concepts Sudoku

By Dave Green

	8	7				4	5	
5								6
4			1	5	2			3
		6	2		4	1		
		3		9		8		
		8	3		6	2		
6			8	1	7			2
3								8
	7	2				6	1	

Difficulty Level ★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Type and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

7	8	1	5	9	6	2	3	4
2	9	3	4	7	1	8	5	6
6	4	5	8	2	3	1	9	7
1	5	9	6	3	7	4	2	8
8	3	7	9	4	2	5	6	1
4	6	2	1	8	5	3	7	9
9	7	4	3	1	9	6	8	2
5	1	6	2	5	8	7	4	3
3	2	8	7	6	4	9	1	5

Concepts Puzzles, Ltd. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Gabby reminded of Sharon in Richard-KC movie

KC CONCEPCION AND RICHARD GUTIERREZ's second team-up—in "When I Met You"—is a lot better than their first. They have reinvented the cutesy and jaw-sweetness stage. KC and Chard's chemistry has that je ne sais-pas factor.

Gabby Concepcion called to invite me to the premiere of his "comeback" movie. KC's movie has 1 million pre-sold tickets! It is the Cinemalaya Evaluation Board screening where we gave it a "B" rating. I missed Gabs. "Dalot. KC's scenes with Chard remind you of your movies with Sharon?" "You bet," Gabs exclaimed. "The phone tricks, beach and wedding scenes, tearjerker finge quite a laughs!"

It is indeed a case of déjà vu for the proud dad. "The love scene for me is when the twist with her heart," Gabs said. "Little gestures of love don't require huge efforts but they yield extraordinary rewards. It is in loving and not in being loved that the heart is blessed."

Pero's "Dear Heart" with Shie scenes take seen heart (and feet) KC.

Next level

After love took its twists and turns in the lives of Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras, fate leads them back together again in GMA-7's intensely "Nasaan Ka, Ang Mangarap," subtly premiere today on Dreamscape as Hapon. It's a gripping saga of unconditional love and destiny.

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

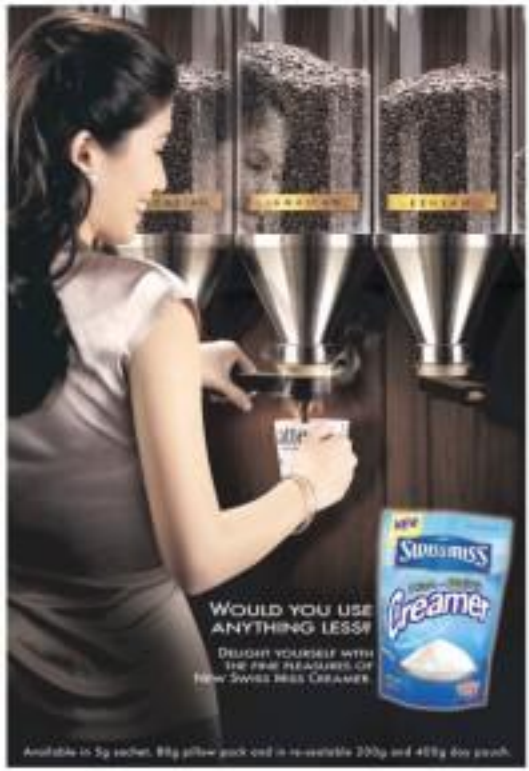
Mark and Jen take their team-up to the next level. "Mukha mas daring kami at ito ako," said Mark. "We have love scenes and I will show more skin." Doon't think I'm exaggerating or wow Jen agad-agad "Ayoko magsalita ng patapos," he replied. "Pero sa ngayon love is not my priority kasi wa kasi nasaktan ako ng isang nakamalayan ko. Now time siempre ko na ang mawa ala magsalita nagsalita ako sarcastic."

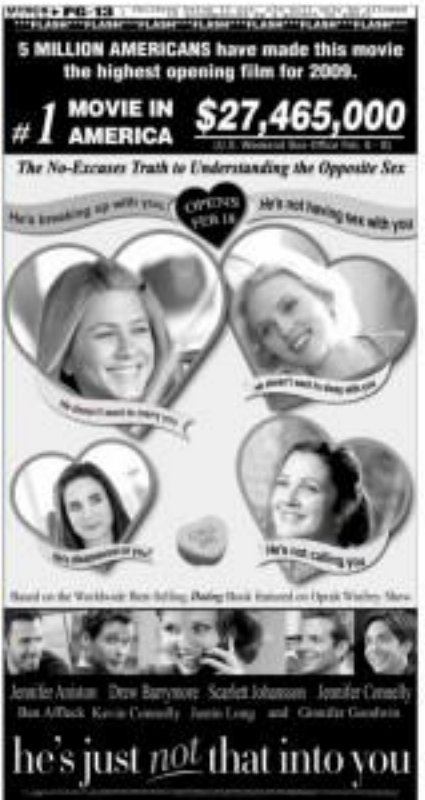
Pero'y he get excited Avery with their intimate scenes? "It's all in the mind Imagine!"

If and when they reconcile, would anybody mind?

Heart over head

Chard's silent at the first anniversary party of Alfred Vargas' uber-trendy Café Mondial (Silver City Pasig). It is co-owned by the fab Sassa Isip-Gutierrez (sister Dench, Caroline and chef Pauline) and Alfred's brother Patrick Michael. It becomes a fusion of gastronomic luxuries from around the world and macadamia.





LEARNING
Editor Chelo Bistol Formoso

INQUIRER IN EDUCATION

bench/

(Last week: The wedding guests spoke about each one's reason for being on earth and questioned why everything they did had to be for business.)

Student activity guide and art contest on p.E3

The Magic Circle

Last chapter

Story by Gilda Cordero Fernando
Illustrations by Gilbert Daray

THE *KAPRE* GLARED piercingly at the crowd, especially at the half dozen or so human guests.

"I was contentedly living in a big mahogany tree in the forest when huge trees came down. All the fruits in it wept. The lizards and the snakes, the birds and the monkeys, the squirrels and the bats, the worms and the ants were displaced. I didn't know where to go. I decided a tiki-tiki is free (that for me still) to Quezon City."

"I was shocked to find how few trees were left there. I grew up in the Marikina area after the war. It was full of tamarind trees then and was called Sampaloc Avenue. I located a cold tamarind tree I remembered at the corner and I settled in its branches. But after a few months, a nervous housewife spotted my glowing cigar and called the police. They came sweeping down in cars with sirens and missed seeing flashlights into my eyes. It was a terrible night. I was awoken with cars and trembling with fright. The police forced me down from the tree like a common criminal. When they realized what I was, they wanted to lock me up in the police wagon. I'm warning you for vengeance; the fastest policeman said. 'Why do you mean to insist on squatting in Greenmeadows Avenue or Santa Rosario?'"

"Where else can I live? I asked. You have destroyed all our habitats. I am a refugee. Just like people who lose their dwellings in areas of typhoons or fires. You can't evict me just like that. I have rights."

"But no one was listening. The policemen began to load me to the wagon when I realized that they were secretly afraid of me. So I was able to escape."

"Since then I have been forced to occupy abandoned buildings and ruined houses, sharing space with lonely ghosts. But, eventually, I was discovered there, too! The owners called priests to exorcise me with candles, holy water and Latin prayers. They would scream at me and beat me up to drive me away—as if I were the devil!"

"I tried to explain…I am not evil. I am a nature spirit. But people say we are bad because sometimes we make you sick or we make you ill. But can't you see that it is we only protect…to make you afraid of us? You feel so superior. You don't want to share space, you disrespect all other beings."

"Only a few pitiful patches of trees are left and people are fighting to occupy them. They dwindle from of fruits, flowers, vines, pods, leaves, bark. Human beings spare nothing! They are merciless. They are nothing the planet and don't even know it. Or care. It will die, who is dead…we or they?"

Every being in the hall was silent.

"And why are people doing this?" asked the monkey.

The *kapre* replied. "Because they are not happy. And they express their unhappiness by destroying everything within reach."

"Humans have lost their connection with nature," said the old serpent. "The only wealth they believe is now is money, and that's only paper and plastic—completely valueless!"

"Humans are afraid there won't be enough for us around," said Golla, the dog.

Pardon nodded his observation. "Even when there is enough food people can't enjoy it. Always worrying about the future when there might be nothing. They can't focus on the present when there is something."

"We are not immune like they" said a curious fairy. "But then we are so much older than mankind. We evolved with the trees. If we give them time maybe humans will learn?"

And an exasperated sneeze came. "Can't they even see that we have a function?

That it is, in fact, we who can teach them how to preserve the environment?"

Dalia Geronima rose to speak. "Every living being is entitled to a place on the planet. The earth exists for all. But for a long time now, life has been very difficult for us invisibles. Our *kapre* is only the latest casualty. He tried his best to protect the remaining trees in order to…

…and he was reduced from to a beggar."

Overwhelmed with sadness, the cariclon-kapre sank to the knees and crumpled to the ground sobbing. He had suffered far too much and his heart was breaking. The creatures hovered over their fallen comrade.

Who was to that said that every time someone stops believing…a fairy dies?

And as the *kapre* breathed his last in the same hall where a wedding had taken place, Pepsi, the Spanish dwarf, embraced the *kapre*'s stained and grimy feet, washing them with his tears. The blinding tears watered us being plucked and held on the *kapre*'s black chest. The generous heroes dwell in homes to become a circular funeral wreath. And a wedding became a death, which is what happens when people do not take adequate care of their dreams.

A tsunami of weeping swept the hall. The tall black *kapre* lovingly lifted their dead friend, hoisting him above their heads. The creatures marched in a procession, the assembly ending on the ground to pave the way. Holding an olive branch, Delta Geronima led them up the rainbow bridge and towards the edge of the universe.

Golla and Pardon, who had become close friends, followed. Then the elves and the dwarfs, the pigeons, the lapu-lapu in a basin, the Bida Ilog Princess and the jolly fish. Next came Pepsi and his sewing cooks, the bird seamstresses, the centipede seamstress seeker and the hamsa who had shot an enchanted dart.

Near the end of the procession strolled Arpey, the poorest boy in the village. He had stopped in a stuff his pockets with wedding cake not bring home to his mother. (She didn't believe in magic until she tasted the enchanted cake made from a root that took seven blue seasons to grow. Life was sad but Arpey's mother finally saw the sadness of a world beyond her daily laundry.)

Bringing up the rear of the procession were the first beggars. They who had long overcome their woes and their hatred—rags were singing hardly.

Dyan, po at sinda
Bigyan ng Ibon Hagar
May naglalamangang
Apat na palad
Nagsiyon ang play
Kumuyin ang pipi
Nitonod ang bulag
Sabing ang ling!

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WIN FREE FRESHMAN COLLEGE TUITION

Inquirer - Lyceum
Essay Writing Contest

Mechanics:

1. In 350 words or less, write an English essay on THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLEGE EDUCATION.

2. The essay must be typewritten, without any typographical errors.

3. Submit a certification from your high school stating that you are enrolled in said school, and a Certification of Authenticity signed by the author.

4. All entries must be accompanied by this Official Entry Coupon. Entries submitted without this coupon will be automatically disqualified.

5. All Filipino Citizens are eligible to join, EXCEPT employees of Philippine Daily Inquirer and Lyceum of the Philippines University and their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity.

6. All entries must be sent to: PR, Marketing and Advertising Office, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Intramuros, Manila. Entries must be received no later than March 31, 2009.

7. Selection Committee is composed of Professors of Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) and Editors from Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI).

8. Winning entry will be published in the April 15 issue of this paper.

Inquirer - Lyceum Essay Writing Contest

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CONTACT NUMBER: _____
SCHOOL: _____
SCHOOL'S CONTACT NUMBER: _____
SIGNATURE: _____

OFFICIAL ENTRY COUPON

LYCEUM of the Philippines University president Roberto Laurel (second right) and Learning editor Chalo Bacani-Formoso sign the Memorandum of Agreement for the essay-writing contest that will grant Lexer's scholarship to the high school senior who writes and submits the best essay on the importance of college education (See coupon at left). Also in photo are Lyceum's Carlos Zosimerado and Inquirer's Rosella Torres.

Mentoring the mentors

UPOU marks 14th year, upgrades teachers' skills

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE Philippines Open University (UPOU) will mark its 14th anniversary Feb. 23-27. Theme of the event is "Building Global Learning Communities."

A time capsule will be buried at the site of the Centennial Center for Digital Learning Building by Dr. Emerlinda R. Roman, president of the UP System; Dr. Nemesio F. Angeles, chair of the Commission on Higher Education and the UP Board of Regents; and Dr. Grace Javier Alfonso, chancellor of the UPOU. Anniversary activities will be held at the UPOU headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna.

Meanwhile, UPOU is starting this month a joint project with the Department of Education's National Volunteer's Academy of the Philippines (NVAP) to improve teacher proficiency in English. Spearheaded by the UPOU's Faculty of Education, the project that ends in May is a blended program delivered online, with face-to-face weekend meetings, to fill gaps in the teachers' English proficiency. NEAP invited UPOU to bolster its certification program in English.

The education faculty will design courses, assess teachers' entry-level skills, produce learning materials and deliver instruction in Psychology of Reading, Beginning Reading, Specialized Writing, and Effective Speech and Communication.

The joint project for some 120 elementary teachers is supervised by NEAP director Dr. Lolita Dig Ertes, with UPOU as implementing agency headed by vice chancellor for academic affairs Hermah M. Hortinela and NEAP dean Ms. Theresa L. de Villa.

Leading voices

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THEY ARE ALL WINNERS. THAT was how lawyer Alberto Arcilla, president and chief executive officer of Viking Cars Inc. (VCI), referred to the 52 young students in the just-concluded Voice of Leadership (VOL) public speaking contest.

But three contestants—Aldin Xavier Valeriu of Ateneo de Manila High School, Regina Isabelle Jacinto of Miriam College High School and Christian Earl Castañeda of La Salle Greenhills—clearly stood out during the three-hour elimination finals, held at the Cat Inn Function Facilities Hall of the SCBC Plaza in Makati City.

Named VOL grand champion, the 17-year-old Valeriu took home a plaque and a P50,000 cash prize. Second and third placers Jacinto and Castañeda each got a plaque and P40,000 and P30,000, respectively. Their respective schools received the same amounts "in support of programs that will help propagate leadership among their faculty and staff," according to Arcilla.

All 12 finalists were also named a VOL semifinalist and P10,000 each for making it to the final round. Their respective schools, on the other hand, got P20,000 each.

The nine other finalists in what Arcilla called a "very tight race" were Rebecca Arcenas Ian, 18 of St. Paul University Quezon City; Marinella Regina Belen of De La Salle-Santiago Zobel; Joseph Chan of Xavier School; Geraldine Mae Fillesis of Assumption College; Madelena Mae Marian of UP Montessori Center; Miguel Thomas Dayo of College-San Agustin; Anna Katrina Pizarro of St. Scholastica's College Manila; Fernando Angelo Santiago of the UP Integrated School; and Beatrice Sheena Tan of St. Jude Catholic School.

Intimate eloquence

Their eight minute speeches on the topic "true leadership," which they wrote themselves, were judged according to content, presentation, mastery of the English (or Filipino) language and organization of ideas.

Emily Abrera, McCann World Group Phils. chair emeritus, chaired the panel of judges composed of Philippine Star chief editor Jane Bellotindos, lawyer and former Ms. Philippine Universe Margie Moran Floirendo, Cat Inn president and TV personality Bentgay "Bent" Aquino, and professional singer Alex Compton.

Hosted by VOL spokesperson Chin Tiu, also former Miss Angkor top gun, the contest finals also featured Broadway star Lea Salonga who paid tribute to the finalists' "optimistic hearts and idealistic minds" with a couple of songs.

Corporate advocacy

Launched in November, the VOL is a corporate advocacy project of VCI and Semiluxurious Motors Corp. (SMC), offroad-like vehicles and importer of premier Swedish automobile Volvo.

Through the program, Volvo "hopes to discover powerful voices that can move and inspire, innovate and instigate leadership transformation among the youth," said Arcilla.

A total of 12 Metro Manila high schools took part in the VOL. Twelve finalists have emerged after a preliminary in an on-board competition. To prepare them for the grueling finals, Volvo sponsored last month's two-day leadership camp in Batipuhan City.

During the workshop, "we saw up close the leadership potentials of these gifted young stars," noted Arcilla.

Chairman Emeritus Valdez described true leaders as "passionate and with a desire to always move forward" and "have-all ways had their ideals intact and are willing to risk themselves for the service of others."

But Rotondo, a leader is "beautiful and never finds it difficult to admit he's wrong."

Castañeda, who wowed the crowd with his Filipino piece, believes a leader is like a tree... "isang matayog na punong may mga sanga-sangang nagsisilbing proteksyon sa lahat at hindi sa kanyang sarili."

Playgrounds for the Mind

EUREKA! *Queenie N. Lee-Chua*

Models of excellence

FOR ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY on Jan. 22, Mentebank Foundation selected 30 of its past awardees (teachers, policemen, journalists, soldiers, artists) to receive the award for Outstanding Excellence and Services (Aoss). Of the 30, 17 were teachers, including the following college professors.

Yesenia B. Pedrajas of San Beda College says Outstanding Teacher is 1999. An orchid scientist, she teaches psychology and sociology and applies what she teaches to the classroom.

"I group students in varied ways and challenge them to excel," she says. "I give them immediate feedback, commend them for great work and challenge them for more improvements. I listen to their feedback, too."

UP System

Princellua Pelajo-Legaspi of the University of the Philippines Diliman, Outstanding Teacher in 1998, is a professor of literature, a nationalistic scholar, an administrator, and an organizer of professional associations.

"Each person has been given specific talents and gifts," she says. "Those who wish to and have the training to govern can occupy positions; those with training in the social sciences should create programs that will create a sovereign society and self-reliant communities; those with training and experience in the medical and allied professions should do their best as doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists and therapists for our people; those in pure science research should push the frontiers of the sciences so its applications can redound to the implementation of science-oriented national policies, for the upliftment of our communities, and more."

Another Magsaysay-Awardee of UP Manila, Outstanding Teacher in 2008, is a nurse and educator. "During the nurse licensure boards exam," she says, "I had to go public on television and radio and take a position contrary to popular position, pushing for a review of the exam and protesting justice. The difficulty lay not in maintaining a principled stand, but in making sure that I continued to express and behave in a professional manner. Tone and nuance determine how disclosed the position we took."

Graciano P. Bantad of the National Institute of Geological Sciences at UP Diliman, Outstanding Teacher in 2000, is now undersecretary of the Department of Science and Technology and supervising undersecretary of Pagasa (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration).

"I make sure that the information Pagasa (gives out) is understood by the people," he says. "I dent introduced a landlord plant on Tubbataha Island, Sandbar, to raise the productivity of coconut farmers. Their output now has a ready market."

Leonardo B. Dedoado of UP Visayas, Outstanding Teacher in 2002, is in the Science Hall of Fame. He moderates Kimiya-a and delayers speakers to serve in remote to their respective languages.

"In my writing classes, I see practically novelists when plagiarism is involved," he says. "In literature, cheating is impossible if the teacher knows how to ask questions. My exams require open books and open notes. My questions are few, from two to five only. These are 'Why' questions and 'If you were,' ... what would you ... ' As a rule, an student should flunk a literature class since it is an opportunity subject."

DLSU

Teresa S. Tullao Jr. of the College of Business and Economics, Outstanding Teacher in 1995, studies regional integration, overseas labor remittances, migration, globalization and economics. Tullao lobbies digital should be restored to the teaching profession because teachers are the primary development partners tomorrow. Aside from adequate pay, a conducive

PADHLUFF Yamul, Dorlado, Angeles Soares Pedrajas, Salazar-Clemeña, Patalinghug, Cayetgang, Lee-Chua, Abad, Tullao Jr.

atmosphere is important for teachers to teach well.

Wynna C. Patalinghug of the chemistry department, Outstanding Teacher in 1994, studies radioactive scavenging and modeling. She has received the National Research Council of the Philippines Lifetime Achievement Award.

"A career in the academe is very exacting," she says. "It requires advanced degrees and investment in time and money. He should have a sustainable critical mass of qualified academics. Government scholarships and salary structures have to be reviewed to attract people to the field."

Rose Marie Salazar-Clemeña of the psychology department, Outstanding Teacher in 2000, pushes for professionalism. "I emphasize the integration of theory, research, and practice," she says. "I am spearheading the development of standards for guidance and counseling in the region."

ADMU

Ma. Assunta C. Cayetgang of the chemistry department, Outstanding Teacher in 1997, is now vice president of the Loyola Schools. She has gone beyond chemistry to science education, spirituality and leadership. She strives to impart excellence in the school.

"Our various programs for both academic and non-academic formation are aligned with this idea," she says. "We want community and workplaces have been blessed with people who give much of themselves and who believe in 'magis,' doing more for God's greater glory."

Ricardo G. Abad of the sociology department, Outstanding Teacher in 2001, has been acknowledged not only for research, but also for directing plays. Passionate in class and on stage, he says, "Passion is dedication, a personal surrender to the cause, a losing of the self to serve a larger goal. [But] to passionate are most mild deep. If deep is done, then no passion here is held deep. In the theatrical world, the people who make a difference exhibit passion. If they don't learn passion in school, they may not get much chance to learn it in the business/public workplace."

I was Outstanding Teacher in 2001, for my work in environment and psychology. It is with pride that I now join the ranks of the Aoss. Thank you, Mentebank Foundation, for this honor, and to my fellow awardees, congratulations!

E-mail Queenie N. Lee-Chua at lileschua@yahoo.com.

Student Activity Guide

Vocabulary

Look in the dictionary for the meaning of each word in the story that you did not understand. Use each word in a sentence or a question. Here are a few sample words and their meanings:

Piercingly – in a way that pierces; able to look or touch the emotion

Tenacity – a single-minded and quickly effective effort

Vagaries – the act of wandering about from place to place with no means of support

Habitat – the place or environment where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows

Exercise – to test a person or a piece of evil spirits

Think about it

1. What caused the Kapre's death? Why do you think so?

2. According to the modules and animals, why are people mistreating nature and other creatures on earth?

3. Take a sheet of paper and write down what you think this creature means: "A evil grandchildren becomes a depth, which is what happens when people do not take adequate care of their dreams." Ask your teachers and other older people what they think this means. Write down their answers. How do their answers compare with yours?

Using the Issues

1. In groups, make a catalogue of creatures found in "The Magic Circle." Do not involve human characters, just their relationships and non-human creatures. Make your catalogue colorful with drawings and interesting with written descriptions that include names, height, weight, powers, distinguishing marks, etc. You can be as wild with your drawings and descriptions as your imagination permits, but a price for each creature. Write a letter selling your catalogue to film directors who are always shopping around for monsters, beasts and monsters for their fantasy-adventure movies.

2. In groups, clip stories from the newspaper about animals in distress, or natural resources that have been flooded (drought) forests, polluted rivers, etc). Make a chart illustrating the situation of the problems. Discuss what could have been done to eliminate or lessen the effect of the causes.

3. Using photos from the newspaper, make a poster showing how people can save Planet Earth.

Values connection

Throughout the story, Jepoy loved all kinds of creatures complaining about what people are doing to them and their habitats. He also witnessed the death of a dugong. Let's say Jepoy has been recollecting creatures in Congress about the plight of this Kapre and other characters in the story. Make a speech for Jepoy that will convince people about the wrong things they are doing to this planet. You can use your posters and your clippings as visual aids.

IIE-Lyra Art Contest

Calling all high school artists

YOU HAVE UNTIL FEB. 28 TO SUBmit your fantasy-themed artwork in the IIE-Lyra Art Contest.

The best free-art entries by high school students will be chosen at the Feb. 28 and each will receive P2,000 worth of art and education-al supplies plus a certificate.

Submit your entries to either the issuance office, Diwa House Annex (formerly Pasong Tamo) corner Vapor Street, Makati City, or the Mart showroom, 407 E. T. Yuchengco Street (formerly Reyes) corner Sabina Pueblo Street, Binondo, Manila.

The theme of the contest is fantasy. Entries must be related to any character or scene in "The Magic Circle" series. Medium may be acrylic or gel crayons on 10" x 15" illustration board.

A student may submit only one art entry and may win only one prize.

On a blank sheet of paper, indicate the student artist's name, school, address, your level, landline and mobile phone. Along with a photocopy of the student's school ID, glue the sheet on the back of the illustration board.

Entries will be judged according to artistic composition, mastery of light, color, technique and form, appropriateness and consistency of details, originality and appeal, and relevance to the chapter.

Prizes may be claimed at the Mart showroom, the same place where entries are submitted.

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Young Voices

There's a leader in each of us

VERY FOCAL. Ateneo's John Xavier Valdes, VOL grand prize winner, is flanked by La Salle's Christian Earl Castañeda (2nd runner-up) and Miriam's Regina Isabelle Jaimee Rosales (1st runner-up).

Story on the Volvo Voice of Leadership elocution contest on Page E2

Editor's note: His piece on leadership, written and delivered by John Xavier D. Valdes of the Ateneo de Manila High School, won the top prize at the Volvo Voice of Leadership elocution contest for high school students.]

MY NAME IS JOHN VALDES. I am 17 years old and I am a senior at the Ateneo de Manila High School. Though I am often mistaken for Chinese or Japanese or Korean ... I am in fact, pure Filipino. I have lived here all my life, save for a few trips abroad, which have only served to strengthen my love for my country and my countrymen.

I love being Filipino. I love how we pick up things with our feet, how we point with our lips and eat with our hands, our hospitality, our staunch zeal for God, and how we treat our elders with utmost respect and love. But there is one Filipino trait that I am most accustomed to admire, and that is our messiah complex.

Now, I'm not talking about the messiah complex that leads one person to believe that he is the savior of the nation, no. The messiah complex that we are afflicted with is the one that makes us think that we are not, one leader, will save all our problems and deliver us from all our hardships overnight. We spread our time looking for that one leader whom we believe will alleviate poverty, annihilate corruption, build infrastructure, and usher in a renaissance for our nation. And we look everywhere for this leader—everywhere, except inside ourselves.

So we all know, the Philippines has been in a RUT for the last couple of decades. Seventy percent of us live below the poverty line, and many more are skirting close to it. There are many who say, "What can I do? I am just a student, I don't have the profession of a leader," or "I am just a farmer, I don't have the education of a leader," or "I am not a politician, I don't have the power or charisma of a leader."

This week I have learned. Leadership is not about education or job experience. It is not about power or charisma. And it is not about social class or distinction. As Mitch Alumedi once wrote, "Leadership is influence. Nothing more, nothing less." And by this definition, every man, woman and child in this nation of 90 million is a leader in his or her own right. The student, the farmer, the grandmother, the blind beggar, the little girl... they all have influence in their communities. Leadership transcends age, gender, handicap and, yes, even the shape of one's eyes.

The fact that you are part of society makes you a leader; a mind in a web, interconnected with 90 million others. If we all just realize the simple fact that we are all leaders and we all have influence—and live out these truths in our daily lives... we can bring about change, and in the very moments our country so desperately needs.

One person I learn who realized the messiah and leader in him is a classmate of mine named Quinco. When I first got to know Quinco, my impression of him was that he loved to eat and he loved to have fun. He was always cracking jokes and the highlight of his day was what he had for lunch. He joined a school organization that his magic tricks. Needless to say, he'd have a lot of his performing in front of people. And fun he had! He relished entertaining crowds and lived to see the bewildered smile on the faces of those watching whenever he guessed their card or made something disappear.

It was this passion for making others people that led him to eventually become the org (organization) president. He enjoyed making people happy so much that he made their happiness his job. He stopped asking himself "How can I have a good time?" and instead asked, "How can I help others have a good time?"

I would have never thought back when I met him that this fluffy, silly-pudy, hit-loving friend of mine would eventually blossom into such a wonderful, wonderful leader.

Quinco dared himself to do more and to be more because he believed in the magic of his magic. He knew that he could make a difference. Now, he is the difference maker in his organization. He has inspired so many people, including myself, to look beyond their personal wants and desires, and try to be members of change in their own little ways.

I am only 17 years old. My experience is limited to my humble student council. My charisma only graces me a small, charming audience. I don't know much about government policy or politics. But I will tell you what I do know.

I know that things cannot remain the way they are. I know that there has to be a change. I know that I am a leader and that I can make a difference, just like Quinco, and just like every single person in this hall. I know that if we all decide right now to be the models and leaders our country needs, we can break down these walls and on the other side we will find a Philippines that is the envy of the whole world. But we have to make this choice together. We must recognize the leader and messiah that is in each one of us and pay the price for change!

Will we continue to just sit by and wait for some savior to pick us up off the ground and save us from our problems? Or will we harness the messiah that lies in each of us to spark a powerful revolution and start a revolution that will bring us out of this darkness and give birth to a new nation?

The choice is ours, my fellow leaders. Let us choose well. The future of our country is in our hands.